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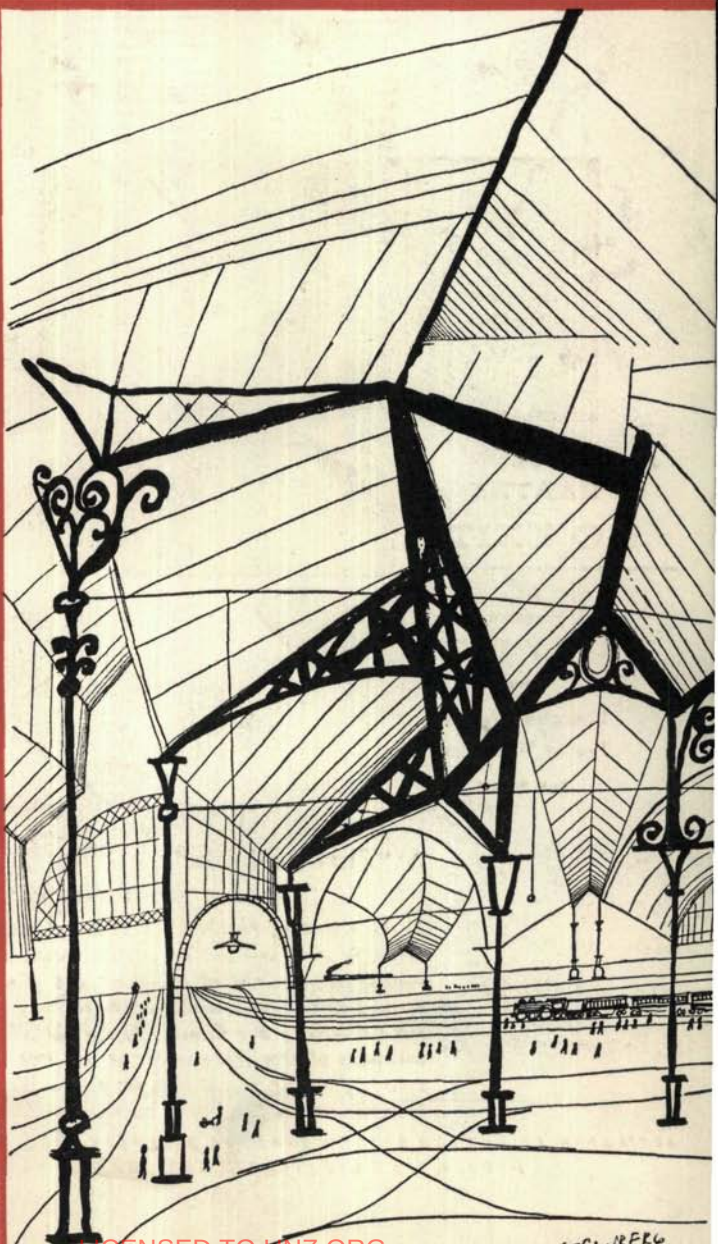

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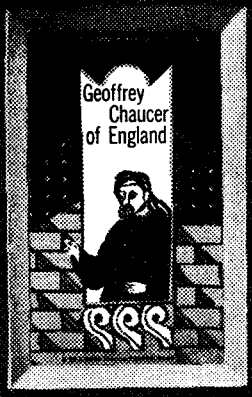

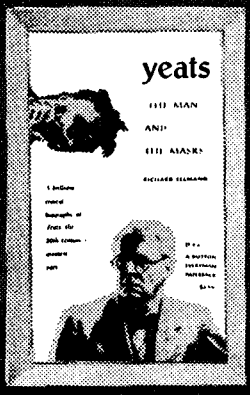

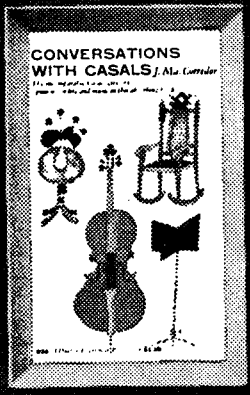

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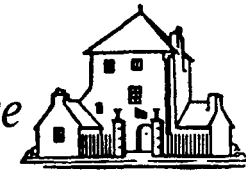
Random House  *Books*

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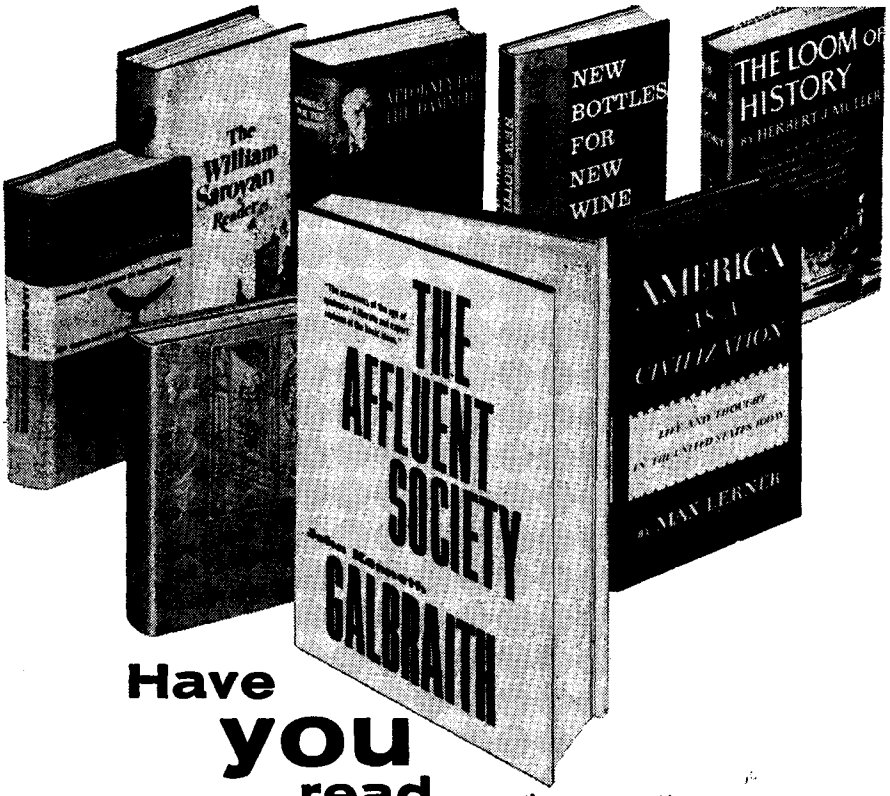

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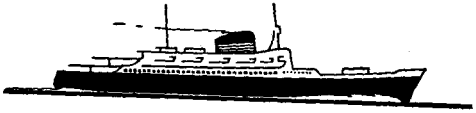

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The Paris Review is published four times a year by The Paris Review, Société à Responsabilité Limitée au capital de 500.000 frs. 1 dollar, 3/6 shillings, 250 francs a copy; 3 dollars, 1000 francs, or 14 shillings per annual subscription (15s 4d postage free). For payment in sterling from countries outside the United Kingdom: 4 shillings per copy, 16 shillings per annual subscription (postage additional). For payment in francs in non-European countries: 1250 francs per annual subscription. Postal cheque number in France: 9749–63. Vol. 5, N° 19. Numero de presse 26.295. SUMMER issue for 1958. Publication office, 16, rue Vernet, Paris 8e, France. Editorial and distribution offices, 401 E. 82nd St, New York 19, N. Y. Representative in England and exclusive distributor in all countries except France, the U.S.A. and Israel, André Deutsch Ltd., 12-14 Carlisle St., Soho Square, London W. 1. Distributed in the U.S.A. by the Eastern News Company. Official representation of the Paris Review Inc. of New York in France, Société Tourvoy, 16 rue Vernet, Paris 8e. Printed in the Netherlands by N.V. Drukkerij G. J. Thieme, Nijmegen.

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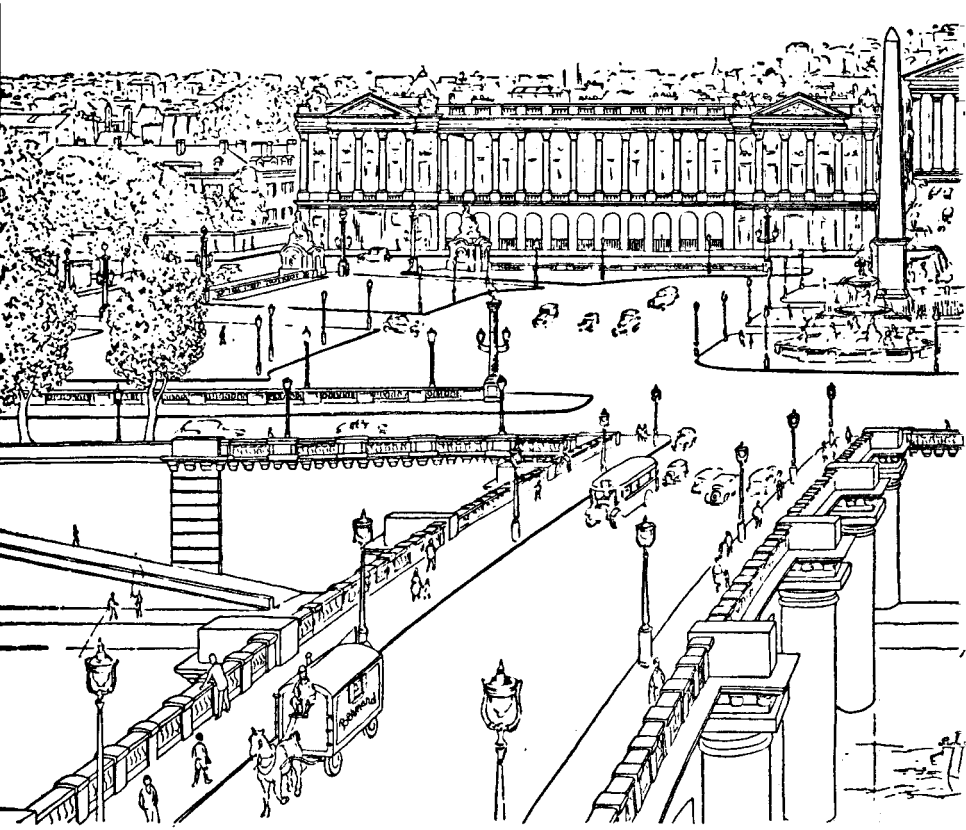

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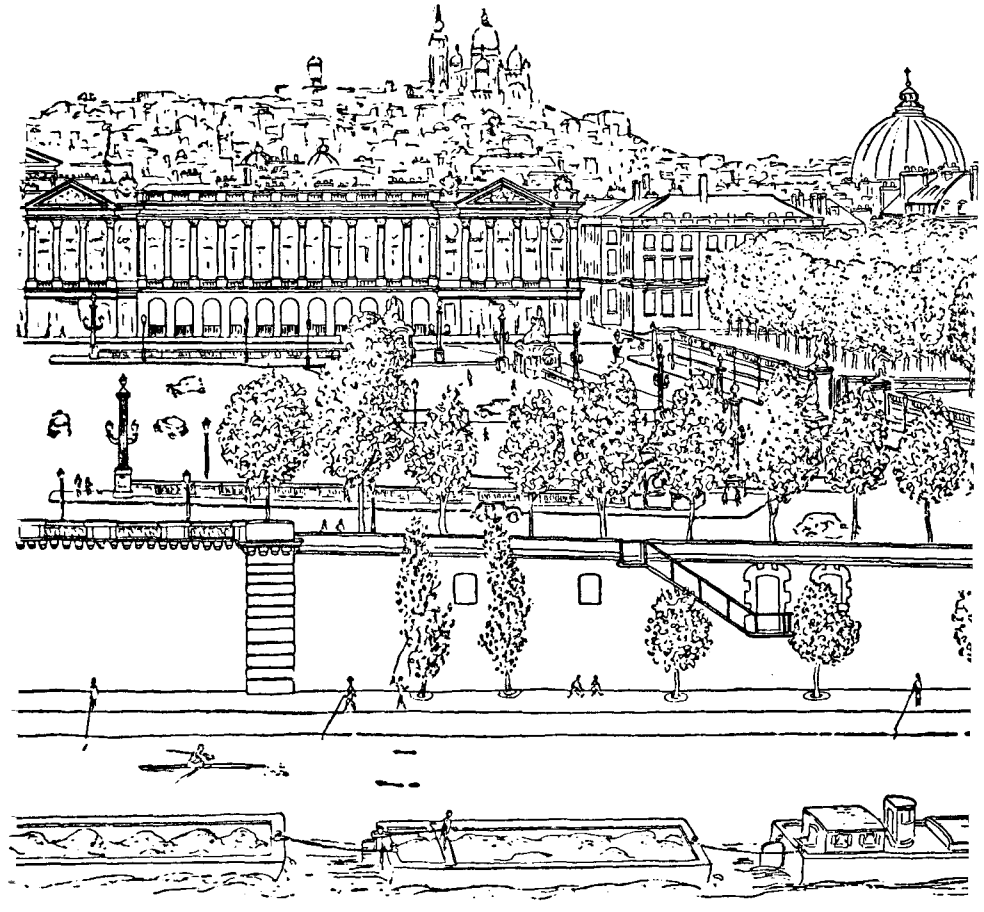

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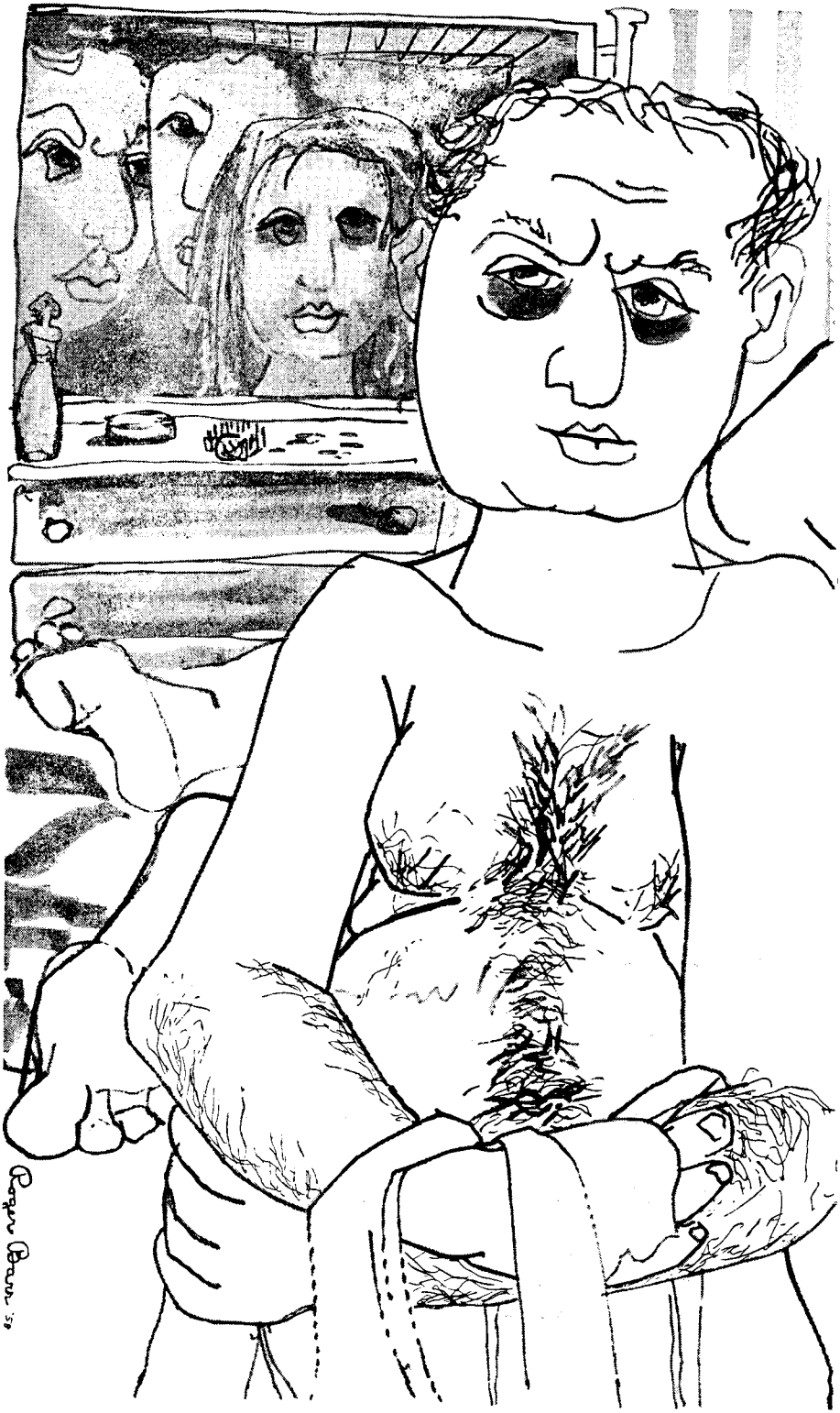

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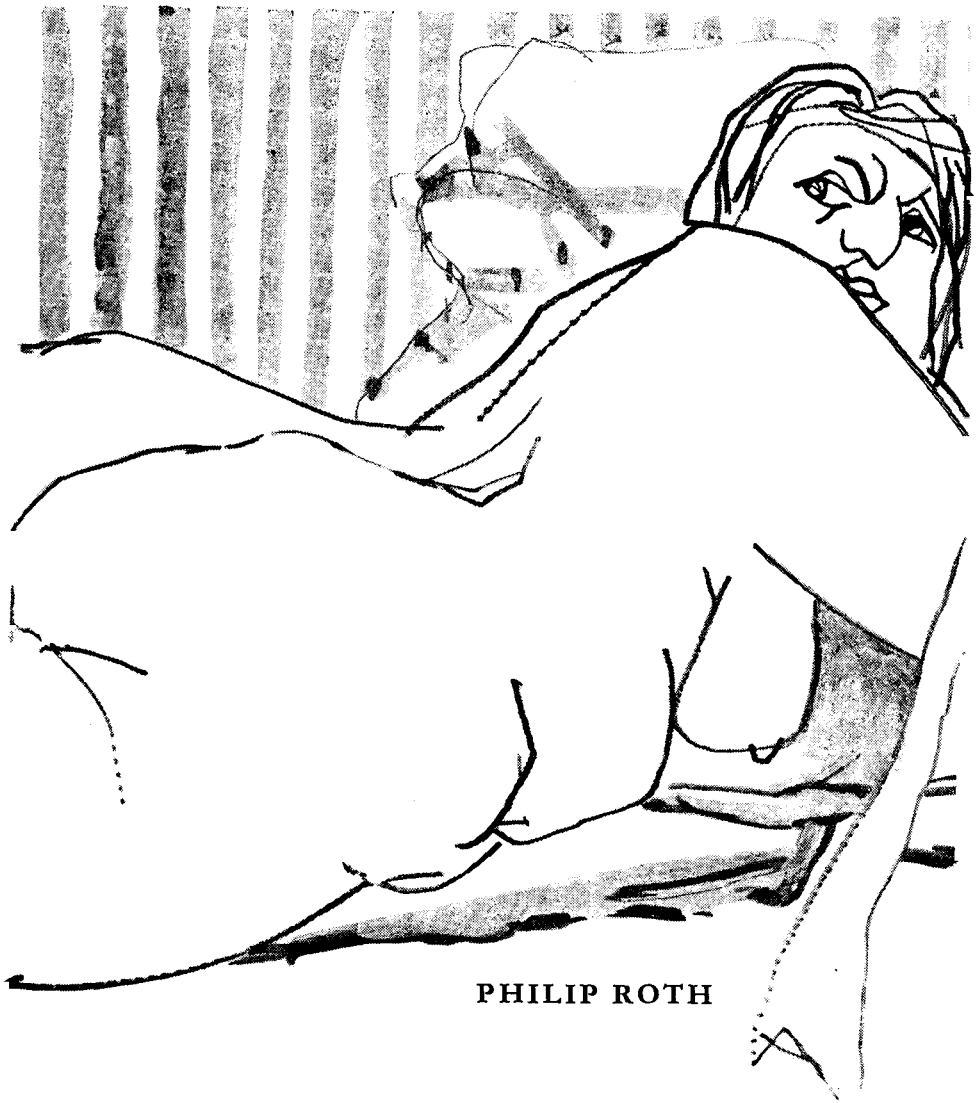

PHILIP ROTH

EPSTEIN

MICHAEL, the weekend guest, was to spend the night in one of the twin beds in Herbie's old room, where the baseball pictures still hung on the wall. Lou Epstein slept with his wife in the room with the bed pushed catter-corner. His

– *Drawings by Roger Barr*

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daughter Sheila's bedroom was empty; she was at a meeting with her fiancé, the folk-singer. In the corner of her room a childhood teddy bear balanced on its bottom, a "*Vote Socialist*" button pinned to its left ear; on her book-shelves, where once volumes of Louisa May Alcott gathered dust, now were collected the works of Howard Fast. The house was quiet. The only light burning was downstairs in the dining room where the *shabus* candles flickered in their tall golden holders and Herbie's *jahrzeit* candle trembled in its glass.

Epstein looked at the dark ceiling of his bedroom and let his head that had been bang-banging all day go blank for a moment. His wife Goldie breathed thickly beside him, as though she suffered from eternal bronchitis. Ten minutes before she had undressed and he had watched as she dropped her white nightdress over her head, over the breasts which had funneled down to her middle, over the behind like a bellows, the thighs and calves veined blue like a roadmap. What once could be pinched, what once was small and tight, now could be poked and pulled. Everything hung. He had shut his eyes while she had dressed for sleep and had tried to remember the Goldie of 1927, the Lou Epstein of 1927. Now he rolled his stomach against her backside, remembering, and reached around to hold her breasts. The nipples were dragged down like a cow's. He rolled back to his own side.

A key turned in the front door—there was whispering, then the door gently shut. He tensed and waited for the noises—it didn't take those Socialists long. At night the noise from the zipping and the un-zipping was enough to keep a man awake. "What are they doing down there?" he had screamed at his wife last Friday night, "Trying on clothes?" Now, once again, he waited. It wasn't that he was against their playing. He was no puritan, he believed in young people enjoying themselves. Hadn't he been a young man himself? But in 1927 he and his wife were handsome people. Lou Epstein had never resembled that chinless, lazy, smart-alec whose living was earned singing folk songs in a saloon, and who once had asked Epstein if it hadn't been "thrilling" to have lived through "a period of great social upheaval" like the thirties.

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And his daughter, why couldn't she have grown up to be like—like the girl across the street whom Michael had the date with, the one whose father had recently died. Now there was a pretty girl. But not his Sheila. What happened, he wondered, what happened to that little pink-skinned baby? What year, what month did those skinny ankles grow thick as logs, the peaches-and-cream turn to pimples? That lovely child was now a twenty-three year old woman with "a social conscience!" Some conscience, he thought. She hunts all day for a picket line to march in so that at night she can come home and eat like a horse... For her and that guitar-plucker to touch each other's unmentionables seemed worse than sinful —it was disgusting. When Epstein tossed in bed and heard their panting and the zipping it sounded in his ears like thunder.

Zip!

They were at it. He would ignore them, think of his other problems. The business... here he was a year away from the retirement he had planned but with no heir to Epstein Paper Bag Company. He had built the business from the ground, suffered and bled during the Depression and Roosevelt, only, finally, with the War and Eisenhower to see it succeed. The thought of a stranger taking it over made him sick. But what could be done? Herbie, who would have been twenty-eight, had died of polio, age eleven. And Sheila, his last hope, had chosen as her intended a lazy man. What could he do? Does a man of fifty-nine all of a sudden start producing heirs?

Zip! Pant-pant-pant! Ahh!

He shut his ears and mind, tighter. He tried to recollect things and drown himself in them. For instance, dinner...

He had been startled when he arrived home from the shop to find the soldier sitting at his dinner table. Surprised because the boy, whom he had not seen for ten or twelve years, had grown up with the Epstein face, as his own son would have, the small bump in the nose, the strong chin, dark skin, and shock of shiny black hair that, one day, would turn gray as clouds.

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"Look who's here," his wife shouted at him the moment he entered the door, the day's dirt still under his fingernails. "Sol's boy."

The soldier popped up from his chair and extended his hand. "How do you do, Uncle Louis?"

"A Gregory Peck," Epstein's wife said, "a Monty Clift your brother has. He's been here only three hours already he has a date. And a regular gentleman..."

Epstein did not answer.

The soldier stood at attention, square, as though he'd learned courtesy long before the Army. "I hope you don't mind my barging in, Uncle Louis. I was shipped to Monmouth last week and Dad said I should stop off to see you people. I've got the weekend off and Aunt Goldie said I should stay..." he waited.

"Look at him," Goldie was saying, "a Prince!"

"Of course," Epstein said at last. "Stay. How is your father?" Epstein had not spoken to his brother Sol since 1945 when he had bought Sol's share of the business and his brother had moved to Detroit, with words.

"Dad's fine," Michael said. "He sends his regards."

"Sure, I send mine too. You'll tell him."

Michael sat down, and Epstein knew that the boy must think just as his father did: that Lou Epstein was a coarse man whose heart beat faster only when he was thinking of Epstein Paper Bag.

When Sheila came home they all sat down to eat, four, as in the old days. Goldie Epstein jumped up and down, up and down, slipping each course under their noses the instant they had finished the one before. "Michael," she said historically, "Michael, as a child you were a very poor eater. Your sister, Ruthie, God bless her, was a nice eater. Not a good eater, but a nice eater."

For the first time Epstein remembered his little niece Ruthie, a little dark-haired beauty, a Bible Ruth. He looked at his own daughter and heard his wife go on. "No, Ruthie wasn't such a good eater. But she wasn't a picky eater. Our Herbie, he should rest in peace, was a picky eater..." Goldie

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looked toward her husband as though he would remember precisely what category of eater his beloved son had been; he stared into his pot roast.

"But," Goldie Epstein resumed, "you should live and be well, Michael, you turned out to be a good eater..."

Ahhh! Ahhh!

The noises snapped Epstein's recollection in two.

Aaahhhh!

Enough was enough. He got out of bed, made certain that he was tucked into his pajamas, and started down to the living room. He would give them a piece of his mind. He would tell them that—that 1927 was not 1957! No, that was what they would tell him.

But in the living room it was not Sheila and the folk-singer. Epstein felt the cold from the floor rush up the loose legs of his pajamas and chill his crotch, raising goose-flesh on his thighs. They did not see him. He retreated a step, back behind the archway to the dining room. His eyes, however, remained fixed on the living room floor, on Sol's boy and the girl from across the street.

The girl had been wearing shorts and a sweater. Now they were thrown over the arm of the sofa. The light from the candles was enough for Epstein to see that she was naked. Michael lay beside her, squirming and potent, wearing only his army shoes and khaki socks. The girl's breasts were like two small white cups. Michael kissed them, and more. Epstein tingled; he did not dare move, he did not want to move, until the two, like cars in a railroad yard, slammed fiercely together, coupled, shook. In their noise Epstein tiptoed, trembling, up the stairs and back to his wife's bed.

He could not force himself to sleep for what seemed like hours, not until the door had opened downstairs and the two young people had left. When, a minute or so later, he heard another key turn in the lock he did not know whether it was Michael returning to go to sleep, or—

Zip!

Now it was Sheila and the folk-singer! The whole world,

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he thought, the whole young world, the ugly ones and the pretty ones, the fat and the skinny ones, zipping and unzipping! He grabbed his great shock of gray hair and pulled it till his scalp hurt. His wife shuffled, mumbled a noise. "Brrr... brrrr..." She captured the blankets and pulled them over her. "Brrr..."

Butter! She's dreaming about butter. Recipes she dreams while the world zips. He closed his eyes and pounded himself down down into an old man's sleep.

How far back must you go to discover the beginning of trouble? Later, when Epstein had more time he would ask himself this question. When did it begin? That night he'd seen those two on the floor? Or the summer night seventeen years before when he had pushed the doctor away from the bed and put his lips to his Herbie's? Or, Epstein wondered, was it that night fifteen years ago when instead of smelling a woman between his sheets he smelled Babo? Or the time when his daughter had first called him "capitalist" as though it were a dirty name, as though it were a crime to be successful? Or was it none of these times? Maybe to look for a beginning was only to look for an excuse. Hadn't the trouble, the big trouble, begun simply when it appeared to begin, the morning he saw Ida Kaufman waiting for the bus?

And about Ida Kaufman, why in God's name was it a stranger, nobody he loved or ever could love, who had finally changed his life?—she, who had lived across the street for less than a year, and who (it was revealed by Mrs. Katz, the neighborhood Winchell) would probably sell her house now that Mr. Kaufman was dead and move all-year-round into the summer cottage she owned at Barnegat? Up until that morning Epstein had no more than noticed the woman: dark, good-looking, a big chest. She hardly spoke to the other housewives, but spent every moment, until a month ago, caring for her cancer-eaten husband. Once or twice Epstein had tipped his hat to her, but even then he had been more absorbed in the fate of Epstein Paper Bag than in the

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civility he was practicing. Actually then, on that Monday morning, it would not have been unlikely for him to have driven right past the bus-stop. It was a warm April day, certainly not a bad day to be waiting for a bus. Birds fussed and sang in the elm trees, and the sun glinted in the sky like a young athlete's trophy. But the woman at the bus-stop wore a thin dress and no coat. Epstein saw her waiting, and beneath the dress, the stockings, the imagined underthings he saw again the body of the girl on his living room rug—for Ida Kaufman was the mother of Linda Kaufman, the girl Michael had befriended. So Epstein pulled slowly to the curb and, stopping for the daughter, picked up the mother.

"Thank you, Mr. Epstein," she said. "This is kind of you."

"It's nothing," Epstein said. "I'm going to Market Street."

"Market Street will be fine."

He pressed down too hard on the accelerator and the big Chrysler leaped away, noisy as a hot-rodder's Ford. Ida Kaufman rolled down her window and let the breeze waft in; she lit a cigarette. After a while she asked, "That was your nephew, wasn't it, that took Linda out Saturday night?"

"Michael? Yes." Epstein flushed, for reasons Ida Kaufman did not know. He felt the red on his neck and coughed to make it appear that some respiratory failure had caused the blood to rush up from his heart.

"He's a very nice boy, extremely polite," she said.

"My brother Sol's," Epstein said. "In Detroit." And he shifted his thoughts to Sol so that the flush might fade: if there had been no words with Sol it would be Michael who would be heir to Epstein Paper Bag. Would he have wanted that? Was it any better than a stranger...?

While Epstein thought, Ida Kaufman smoked, and they drove on without speaking, under the elm trees, the choir of birds, and the new spring sky unfurled like a blue banner.

"He looks like you," she said.

"What? Who?"

"Michael."

"No," Epstein said, "him, he's the image of Sol."

"No, no, don't deny it—" and she exploded with laughter,

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smoke dragoning out of her mouth; she jerked her head back mightily, "No, no, no, he's got your face!"

Epstein looked at her, wondering: the lips, big and red, over her teeth, grinning. Why? Of course—your little boy looks like the ice man, she'd made that joke. He grinned, mainly at the thought of going to bed with his sister-in-law, whose everything had dropped even lower than his wife's.

Epstein's grin provoked Ida Kaufman into more extravagant mirth. What the hell, he decided, he would try a joke himself.

"Your Linda, who does *she* look like?"

Ida Kaufman's mouth straightened; her lids narrowed, killing the light in her eyes. Had he said the wrong thing? Stepped too far? Defiled the name of a dead man, a man who'd had cancer yet? But no, for suddenly she raised her arms in front of her, and shrugged her shoulders as though to say, "Who knows, Epstein, who knows?"

Epstein roared. It was so long since he had been with a woman who had a sense of humor; his wife took everything he said seriously. Not Ida Kaufman, though—she laughed so hard her breasts swelled over the top of her tan dress. They were not cups but pitchers. The next thing Epstein knew he was telling her another joke, and another, in the middle of which a cop screamed up alongside him and gave him a ticket for a red light which, in his joy, he had not seen. It was the first of three tickets he received that day; he earned a second racing down to Barnegat later that morning, and a third speeding up the Parkway at dusk, trying not to be too late for dinner. The tickets cost him $32 in all, but as he told Ida, when you're laughing so hard you have tears in your eyes, how can you tell the green lights from the red ones, fast from slow?

At seven o'clock that evening he returned Ida to the bus-stop on the corner and squeezed a bill into her hands.

"Here," he said, "here—buy something;" which brought the day's total to fifty-two.

Then he turned up the street, already prepared with a story for his wife: a man interested in buying Epstein Paper Bag had kept him away all day, a good prospect. As he pulled into his driveway he saw his wife's square shape in back of the

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venetian blinds; she ran one hand across a slat, checking for dust while she awaited her husband's homecoming.

Prickly heat?

He clutched his pajama trousers around his knees and looked at himself in the bedroom mirror. Downstairs a key turned in the lock but he was too engaged to hear it. Prickly heat is what Herbie always had—a child's complaint. Was it possible for a grown man to have it? He shuffled closer to the mirror, tripping on his half-hoisted pajamas. Maybe it was a sand rash. Sure, he thought, for during those three warm, sunny weeks, he and Ida Kaufman, when they were through, would rest on the beach in front of the cottage. Sand must have gotten into his trousers and irritated him on the drive up the Parkway. He stepped back now and was squinting at himself in the mirror when Goldie walked into the bedroom. She had just emerged from a hot tub—her bones ached, she had said—and her flesh was boiled red. Her entrance startled Epstein, who had been contemplating his blemish with the intensity of a philosopher; when he turned swiftly from his reflection, his feet caught in the pant-legs, he tripped, and the pajamas slipped to the floor. So there they were, naked as Adam and Eve, except that Goldie was red all over, and Epstein had prickly heat, or a sand rash, or—and it came to him as a first principle comes to a metaphysician. Of course! His hands shot down to cover his crotch.

Goldie looked at him, mystified, while Epstein searched for words appropriate to his posture.

At last: "You had a nice bath?"

"Nice, shmise, it was a bath," his wife mumbled.

"You'll catch a cold," Epstein said. "Put something on."

"I'll catch a cold? *You'll* catch a cold!" She looked at the hands laced across his crotch. "Something hurts?"

"It's a little chilly," he said.

"Where?" She motioned towards his protection. "There?"

"All over."

"Then cover all over."

He leaned over to pick up his pajama trousers; the instant

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he dropped the fig leaf of his hands Goldie let out a short airless gasp. "What is *that*?"

"What?"

"That!"

He could not look into the eyes of her face, so concentrated instead on the purple eyes of her droopy breasts. "A sand rash, I think."

"*Vus far* sand!"

"A rash then," he said.

She stepped up closer and reached out her hand, not to touch but to point. She drew a little circle of the area with her index finger. "A rash, there?"

"Why not there?" Epstein said. "It's like a rash on the hand or the chest. A rash is a rash."

"But how come all of a sudden?" his wife said.

"Look, I'm not a doctor," Epstein said. "It's there today, maybe tomorrow it'll be gone. How do I know! I probably got it from the toilet seat at the shop. The *shvartzes* are pigs—"

Goldie made a clicking sound with her tongue.

"You're calling me a liar?"

She looked up. "Who said liar?" And she gave her own form a swift looking-over, checked limbs, stomach, breasts, to see if she had caught the rash from him. She looked back at her husband, then at her own body again, and suddenly her eyes widened. "You!" she screamed.

"Shah," Epstein said, "you'll wake Michael."

"You pig! Who was it!"

"I told you who, the *shvartzes*—"

"Liar! Pig!" Wheeling her way back to the bed, she flopped on to it so hard the springs squeeked as they rarely had in their last decade of love-making. "Liar!" And then she was off the bed pulling the sheets from it. "I'll burn them, I'll burn every one!"

Epstein stepped out of the pajamas that roped his ankles and raced to the bed. "What are you doing—it's not catching. Only on the toilet seat. You'll buy a little ammonia..."

"Ammonia!" she yelled, "you should *drink* ammonia!"

"No," Epstein shouted, "no," and he grabbed the sheets

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from her and threw them back over the bed, tucking them in madly. "Leave it be—" He ran to the back of the bed but as he tucked there Goldie raced around and ripped up what he had tucked in the front; so he raced back to the front while Goldie raced around to the back. "Don't touch me," she screamed, "don't come near me, you filthy pig! Go touch some filthy whore!" Then she yanked the sheets off again in one swoop, held them in a ball before her and spat. Epstein grabbed them back and the tug-of-war began, back and forth, back and forth, until they had torn them to shreds. Then, for the first time Goldie cried. With white strips looped over her arms she began to sob. "My sheets, my nice clean sheets—" and she threw herself on the bed.

Two faces appeared in the doorway of the bedroom. Sheila Epstein groaned, "Holy Christ!"; the folk-singer peeked in, once, twice, and then bobbed out, his feet scuttling down the stairs. Epstein whipped some white strands about him to cover his privates. He did not say a word as his daughter entered.

"Mama, what's the matter?"

"Your father," the voice groaned from the bed, "he has—a rash!" And so violently did she begin to sob that the flesh on her white buttocks rippled and jumped.

"That's right," Epstein said, "a rash. That's a crime? Get out of here! Let your mother and father get some sleep."

"Why is she crying?" Sheila demanded. "I want an answer!"

"How do I know! I'm a mind-reader? This whole family is crazy, who knows what they think!"

"Don't call my mother crazy!"

"Don't you raise your voice to me! Respect your father!" He pulled the white strips tighter around him. "Now get out of here!"

"No!"

"Then I'll throw you out." He started for the door; his daughter did not move, and he could not bring himself to reach out and push her. Instead he threw back his head and addressed the ceiling. "She's picketing my bedroom! Get out,

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you lummox!" He took a step toward her and growled, as though to scare away a stray cat or dog. With all her 160 pounds she pushed her father back; in his surprise and hurt he dropped the sheet. And the daughter looked on the father; under her lipstick she turned white.

Epstein looked up at her; he pleaded, "I got it from the toilet seat. The *shvartzes*—"

Before he could finish, a new head had popped into the doorway, hair messed and lips swollen and red; it was Michael, home from Linda Kaufman, his regular weekend date. "I heard the noise, is any—" and he saw his aunt naked on the bed; when he turned his eyes away, there was Uncle Lou.

"All of you," Epstein shouted. "Get out!"

But no one obeyed. Sheila blocked the door, politically committed: Michael's legs were rooted, one with shame, the other curiosity.

"Get out!"

Feet now came pounding up the stairs. "Sheila, should I call somebody—" And then the guitar-plucker appeared in the doorway, eager, big-nosed. He surveyed the scene and his gaze, at last, landed on Epstein's crotch; the beak opened.

"What's he got? The syph?"

The words hung for a moment, bringing peace. Goldie Epstein stopped crying and raised herself off the bed. The young men in the doorway lowered their eyes. Goldie arched her back, flopped out her breasts, and began to move her lips. "I want..." she said. "I want..."

"What Mama?" Sheila demanded. "What is it?"

"I want... a divorce!" She looked amazed when she said it, though not as amazed as her husband; he smacked his palm to his head.

"Divorce! Are you crazy?" Epstein looked around; to Michael he said, "She's crazy!"

"I want one," she said, and then her eyes rolled up into her head and she passed out across the sheetless mattress.

After the smelling salts, Epstein was ordered to bed in Herbie's room. He tossed and turned in the narrow bed

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which he was unused to; in the twin bed beside him he heard Michael breathing. Monday, he thought, Monday he would seek help. A lawyer. No, first a doctor. Surely in a minute a doctor could take a look and tell him what he already knew—that Ida Kaufman was a clean woman. Epstein would swear by it—he had smelled her flesh! The doctor would reassure him: his blemish resulted simply from their rubbing together. It was a temporary thing, produced by two, not transmitted by one. He was innocent! Unless what made him guilty had nothing to do with some dirty bug. But either way the doctor would prescribe for him. And then the lawyer would prescribe. And by then everyone would know, including, he suddenly realized, his brother Sol who would take special pleasure in thinking the worst. Epstein rolled over and looked to Michael's bed. Pinpoints of light gleamed in the boy's head; he was awake, and wearing the Epstein nose, chin, and brow.

"Michael?"

"Yes."

"You're awake?"

"Yes."

"Me too," Epstein said, and then apologetically, "all the excitement..."

He looked back to the ceiling. "Michael?"

"Yes?"

"Nothing..." But he was curious as well as concerned. "Michael, you haven't got a rash, have you?"

Michael sat up in bed; firmly he said, "No."

"I just thought," Epstein said quickly. "You know, I have this rash..." He dwindled off and looked away from the boy, who, it occurred to him again, might have been heir to the business if that stupid Sol hadn't... But what difference did the business make now. The business had never been for him, but for them. And there was no more them.

He put his hands over his eyes. "The change, the change," he began. "I don't even know when it began. Me, Lou Epstein, with a rash. I don't even feel anymore like Lou Epstein. All of a sudden, pffft! and things are changed." He looked at Michael again, speaking slowly now, stressing every word, as

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though the boy were more than a nephew, more, in fact, than a single person. "All my life I tried. I swear it, I should drop dead on the spot, if all my life I didn't try to do right, to give my family what I didn't have..."

He stopped; it was not exactly what he wanted to say. He flipped on the bedside light and started again, a new way. "I was seven years old, Michael. I came here I was a boy seven years old, and that day, I can remember it like it was yesterday. Your grandparents and me—your father wasn't born yet, this stuff believe me he doesn't know. With your grandparents I stood on the dock, waiting for Charlie Goldstein to pick us up. He was your grandfather's partner in the old country, the thief. Anyway, we waited, and finally he came to pick us up, to take us where we would live. And when he came he had a big can in his hand. And you know what was in it? Kerosene. That's right, kerosene. We stood there and Charlie Goldstein poured it on all our heads. He rubbed it in, to delouse us. It tasted awful. For a little boy it was awful..."

Michael shrugged his shoulders.

"Eh! How can you understand?" Epstein grumbled. "What do you know? Twenty years old..."

Michael shrugged again. "Twenty-two," he said softly.

There were more stories Epstein could tell, but he wondered if any of them would bring him closer to what it was he had on his mind but could not find the words for. He got out of bed and walked to the bedroom door. He opened it and stood there listening; on the downstairs sofa he could hear the folk-singer snoring. Some night for guests! He shut the door and came back into the room, scratching his thigh. "Believe me, *she's* not losing any sleep... She doesn't deserve me. What, she cooks? That's a big deal? She cleans? That deserves a medal? One day I should come home and the house should be a *mess*. I should be able to write my initials in the dust, somewhere, in the basement at least. Michael, after all these years that would be a pleasure!" He grabbed at his gray hair. "How did this happen? My Goldie, that such a woman should become a cleaning machine. Impossible." He walked to the far wall and stared into Herbie's baseball pictures, the

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long jaw-muscled faces, faded technicolor now, with signatures at the bottom: Charlie Keller, Lou Gerhig, Red Ruffing... a long time. How Herbie had loved his Yankees.

"One night," Epstein started again, "it was before the Depression even... you know what we did, Goldie and me?" He was staring at Red Ruffing now, through him. "You didn't know my Goldie, what a beautiful beautiful woman she was. And that night we took pictures, photos. I set up the camera—it was in the old house—and we took pictures, in the bedroom." He stopped, remembered. "I wanted a picture of my wife naked, to carry with me. I admit it. The next morning I woke up and there was Goldie tearing up the negatives. She said God forbid I should get in an accident one day and the police would take out my wallet for identification, and then oy-oy-oy!" He smiled. "You know, a woman, she worries... But at least we took the pictures, even if we didn't develop them. How many people even do that?" He wondered, and then turned away from Red Ruffing to Michael, who was, faintly, at the corners of his mouth, smiling.

"What, the photos?"

Michael started to giggle.

"Huh?" Epstein smiled. "What, you never had that kind of idea? I admit it. Maybe to someone else it would seem wrong, a sin or something, but who's to say—"

Michael stiffened, at last his father's son. "Somebody's got to say. Some things just aren't right."

Epstein was willing to admit a youthful lapse. "Maybe," he said, "maybe she was even right to tear—"

Michael shook his head vehemently. "No! Some things aren't right. They're just not!"

And Epstein saw that the finger was pointed not at Uncle Lou, the Photographer, but at Uncle Lou, the Adulterer. Suddenly he was shouting. "Right, wrong! From you and your father that's all I ever hear. Who are you, what are you, King Solomon! He gripped the bed posts. Should I tell you what else happened the night we took pictures? That my Herbie was started that night, I'm sure of it. Over a year we tried and tried till I was *oysgamitched*, and that was the night.

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After the pictures, because of the pictures. Who knows!"

"But—"

"But what! But *this*?" He was pointing at his crotch. "You're a boy, you don't understand. When they start taking things away from you, you reach out, you *grab*—maybe like a pig even, but you grab. And right, wrong, who knows! With tears in your eyes, who can even see the difference!" His voice dropped now, but in a minor key the scolding grew more fierce. "Don't call *me* names. I didn't see you with Ida's girl, there's not a name for that? For *you* it's right?"

Michael was kneeling in his bed now. "*You—saw?*"

"I saw!"

"But it's different—"

"Different?" Epstein shouted.

"To be married is different!"

"What's different you don't know about. To have a wife, to be a father, twice a father—and then they start taking things away—" and he fell weak-kneed across Michael's bed. Michael leaned back and looked at his Uncle, but he did not know what to do or how to chastise, for he had never seen anybody over fifteen years old cry before.

Usually Sunday morning went like this: at nine thirty Goldie started the coffee and Epstein walked to the corner for the lox and the Sunday *News*. When the lox was on the table, the bagles in the oven, the rotagravure section of the *News* two inches from Goldie's nose, then Sheila would descend the stairs, yawning, in her toe-length housecoat. They would sit down to eat, Sheila cursing her father for buying the *News* and "putting money in a Fascist's pocket." Outside, the Gentiles would be walking to church. It had always been the same, except, of course, that over the years the *News* had come closer to Goldie's nose and further from Sheila's heart; she had the *Post* delivered.

This Sunday when he awoke Epstein smelled coffee bubbling in the kitchen, and when he sneaked down the stairs, past the kitchen—he had been ordered to use the basement bathroom until he'd seen a doctor—he could smell lox.

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And, at last, when he entered the kitchen, shaved and dressed, he heard newspapers rattling. It was as if another Epstein, his ghost, had risen an hour earlier and performed his Sunday duties. Beneath the clock, around the table, sat Sheila, the folk-singer, and Goldie. Bagles toasted in the oven, while the folk-singer, sitting backwards in a chair, strummed his guitar and sang—

I've been down so long
It look like up to me...

Epstein clapped his hands and rubbed them together, preparatory to eating. "Sheila, you went out for this?" He gestured towards the paper and the lox. "Thank you."

The folk-singer looked up, and in the same tune, improvised—

I went out for the lox

and grinned, a regular clown.

"Shut up!" Sheila told him.

He echoed her words, plunk! plunk!

"Thank *you*, then, young man," Epstein said.

"His name is Marvin," Sheila said, "for your information."

"Thank you, Martin."

"Mar*vin*," the young man said.

"I don't hear so good."

Goldie Epstein looked up from the paper. "Syphilis softens the brain."

"What!"

"Syphilis softens the brain..."

Epstein stood up, raging. "Did you tell her that?" he shouted at his daughter. "Who told her that!"

The folk-singer stopped plucking his guitar. Nobody answered; a conspiracy. He grabbed his daughter by the shoulders. "You respect your father, you understand!"

She jerked her shoulder away. "You're not *my* father!"

And the words hurled him back, to the joke Ida Kaufman had made in the car, to her tan dress, the spring sky... He leaned across the table to his wife. "Goldie, Goldie, look at me! Look at *me*, Lou!"

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She stared back into the newspaper, though she held it far enough from her nose for Epstein to know she could not see the print; with everything else, the optometrist said the muscles in her eyes had loosened. "Goldie," he said, "Goldie, I did the worst thing in the world? Look me in the eyes, Goldie. Tell me, since when do Jewish people get a divorce? Since when?"

She looked up at him, and then to Sheila. "Syphilis makes soft brains. I can't live with a pig!"

"We'll work it out. We'll go to the rabbi—"

"He wouldn't recognize you—"

"But the children, what about the children?"

"What children?"

Herbie was dead and Sheila a stranger; she was right.

"A grown-up child can take care of herself," Goldie said. "If she wants, she can come to Florida with me. I'm thinking I'll move to Miami Beach."

"Goldie!"

"Stop shouting," Sheila said, anxious to enter the brawl whatever way she could. "You'll wake Michael."

Painfully polite, Goldie addressed her daughter. "Michael left early this morning. He took his Linda to the beach for the day, to their place in Belmar."

"Barnegat," Epstein grumbled, retreating from the table.

"What did you say?" Sheila demanded.

"Barnegat." And he decided to leave the house before any further questions were asked.

At the corner luncheonette he bought his own paper and sat alone, drinking coffee and looking out the window beyond which the people walked to church. A pretty young *shiksa* walked by, holding her white round hat in her hand; she bent over to remove her shoe and shake a pebble from it. Epstein watched her bend, and he spilled some coffee on his shirt front. The girl's small behind was round as an apple beneath the close-fitting dress. He looked, and then as though he were praying, he struck himself on the chest with his fist, again and again. "What have I done! Oh, God!"

When he finished his coffee, he took his paper and started up the street. To home? What home? Across the street in her

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back-yard he saw Ida Kaufman, who was wearing shorts and a halter and was hanging her daughter's underwear on the clothes line. Epstein looked around and saw only the Gentiles walking to church. Ida saw him and smiled. Growing angry, he stepped off the curb and, passionately, began to jaywalk.

At noon in the Epstein house those present heard a siren go off. Sheila looked up from the *Post* and listened; she looked at her watch. "Noon? I'm fifteen minutes slow. This lousy watch, my father's present."

Goldie Epstein was leafing through the ads in the travel section of the *New York Times*, which Marvin had gone out to buy for her. She looked at her watch. "I'm fourteen minutes slow. Also," she said to her daughter, "a watch from him..."

The wail grew louder. "God Almighty," Sheila said, "it sounds like the end of the world."

And Marvin, who had been polishing his guitar with his red handkerchief, immediately broke into song, a high-pitched, shut-eyed, Negro tune about the end of the world.

"Quiet!" Sheila said. She cocked her ear. "But it's Sunday. The sirens are Saturday—"

Goldie shot off the couch. "It's a real air raid? Oy, that's all we need!"

"It's the police," Sheila said, and fiery-eyed she raced to the front door, for she was politically opposed to police. "It's coming up the street—an ambulance!"

She raced out the door, followed by Marvin, whose guitar still hung around his neck. Goldie trailed behind, her feet slapping against her slippers. On the street she suddenly turned back to the house to make sure the door was shut against daytime burglars, bugs, and dust. When she turned again she had not far to run. The ambulance had pulled up across the street in Kaufman's drive-way.

Already a crowd had gathered, neighbors in bathrobes, housecoats, carrying the comic sections with them; and too, churchgoers, *shiksas* in white hats. Goldie could not make her

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way to the front where her daughter and Marvin stood, but even from the rear of the crowd she could see a young doctor leap from the ambulance and race up to the porch, his stethoscope wiggling in his back pocket as he took two steps at a time.

Mrs. Katz arrived. A squat red-faced woman whose stomach seemed to start at her knees, she tugged at Goldie's arm. "Goldie, more trouble here?"

"I don't know, Pearl. All that racket. I thought it was an atomic bomb."

"When it's that, you'll know," Pearl Katz said. She surveyed the crowd, then looked at the house. "Poor woman," she said, remembering that only three months before, on a windy March morning, an ambulance had arrived to take Mrs. Kaufman's husband to the nursing home, from which he never returned.

"Troubles, troubles..." Mrs. Katz was shaking her head, a pot of sympathy. "Everybody has their little bundle, believe me. I'll bet she had a nervous breakdown. That's not a good thing. Gall stones, you have them out and they're out. But a nervous breakdown, it's very bad... You think maybe it's the daughter who's sick?"

"The daughter isn't home," Goldie said. "She's away with my nephew, Michael."

Mrs. Katz saw that no one had emerged from the house yet; she had time to gather a little information. "He's who, Goldie? The son of the brother-in-law that Lou doesn't talk to? That's his father?"

"Yes, Sol in Detroit—"

But she broke off, for the front door had opened, though still no one could be seen. A voice at the front of the crowd was commanding, "A little room here. Please! A little room, damn it!" It was Sheila. "A little room! Marvin, help me!"

"I can't put down my guitar—I can't find a place—"

"Get them back!" Sheila said.

"But my instrument—"

The doctor and his helper were now wiggling and tilting the stretcher through the front door. Behind them stood

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Mrs. Kaufman, a man's white shirt tucked into her shorts. Her eyes peered out of two red holes; she wore no make-up, Mrs. Katz noted.

"It must be the girl," said Pearl Katz, up on her toes. "Goldie, can you see, who is it—it's the girl?"

"The girl's *away*—"

"Stay back!" Sheila commanded. "Marvin, for crying out loud, help!"

"My instrument—"

The young doctor and his attendant held the stretcher steady as they walked sideways down the front steps.

Mrs. Katz jumped up and down. "Who *is* it?"

"I can't see," Goldie said. "I can't—" she pushed up on her toes, out of her slippers. "I—oh God! My God!" And she was racing forward, screaming, "Lou! Lou!"

"Mama, stay back." Sheila found herself fighting off her mother. The stretcher was sliding into the ambulance now.

"Sheila, let me go, it's your father!" She pointed to the ambulance, whose red eye spun slowly on top. For a moment Goldie looked back to the steps. Ida Kaufman stood there yet, her fingers fidgeting at the buttons of the shirt. Then Goldie broke for the ambulance, her daughter beside her, propelling her by her elbows.

"Who are you?" the doctor said. He took a step towards them to stop their forward motion, for it seemed as if they intended to dive right into the ambulance on top of his patient.

"The wife—" Sheila shouted.

The doctor pointed to the porch. "Look, lady—"

"I'm the *wife*," Goldie cried. "Me!"

The doctor looked at her. "Get in."

Goldie wheezed as Sheila and the doctor helped her into the ambulance, and she let out a gigantic gasp when she saw the white face sticking up from the gray blanket; his eyes were closed, his skin grayer than his hair. The doctor pushed Sheila aside, climbed in, and then the ambulance was moving, the siren screaming. Sheila ran after the ambulance a moment, hammering on the door.

Goldie turned to the doctor. "He's dead?"

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"No, he had a heart attack."

She smacked her face.

"He'll be all right," the doctor said.

"But a heart attack. Never in his life."

"A man sixty, sixty-five, it happens." The doctor snapped the answers back while he held Epstein's wrist.

"He's only fifty-nine."

"Some only," the doctor said.

The ambulance zoomed through a red light and made a sharp right turn that threw Goldie to the floor. She sat there and spoke. "But how does a healthy man—"

"Lady, don't ask questions. A grown man can't act like a boy."

She put her hands over her eyes, as Epstein opened his.

"He's awake now," the doctor said. "Maybe he wants to hold your hand or something."

Goldie crawled to his side and looked at him. "Lou, you're all right? Does anything hurt?"

He did not answer. "He knows it's me?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "Tell him."

"It's me, Lou."

"It's your wife, Lou," the doctor said. Epstein blinked his eyes. "He knows," the doctor said. "He'll be all right. All he's got to do is live a normal life, normal for sixty."

"You hear the doctor, Lou. All you got to do is live a normal life."

Epstein opened his mouth. His tongue hung over his teeth like a dead snake.

"Don't you talk," his wife said. "Don't you worry about anything. Not even the business. That'll work out. Our Sheila will marry Marvin and that'll be that. You won't have to sell, Lou, it'll be in the family. You can retire, rest, and Marvin can take over. He's a smart boy, Marvin, a *mensch*."

Lou rolled his eyes in his head.

"Don't try to talk. I'll take care. You'll be better soon and we can go someplace. We can go to Saratoga, to the mineral baths, if you want. We'll just go, you and me—" Suddenly she gripped his hand. "Lou, you'll live normal, won't you?

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Won't you?" She was crying. "Cause what'll happen, Lou, is you'll kill yourself! You'll keep this up and that'll be the end—"

"All right," the young doctor said, "you take it easy now. We don't want two patients on our hands."

The ambulance was pulling down and around into the side entrance of the hospital and the doctor knelt at the back door.

"I don't know why I'm crying," Goldie wiped her eyes. "He'll be all right? You say so, I believe you, you're a doctor." And as the young man swung open the door with the big red cross painted on the back, she asked, softly, "Doctor, you have something that will cure what else he's got—this rash?" She pointed.

The doctor looked at her. Then he lifted for a moment the blanket that covered Epstein's nakedness.

"Doctor, it's bad?"

Goldie's eyes and nose were running.

"An irritation," the doctor said.

She grabbed his wrist. "You can clean it up?"

"So it'll never come back," the doctor said, and hopped out of the ambulance.

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REFERRED BACK

That was a pretty one, I heard you call
From the unsatisfactory hall
To the unsatisfactory room where I
Played record after record, idly,
Wasting my time at home, that you
Looked so much forward to.

Oliver's *Riverside Blues*, it was. And now
I shall, I suppose, always remember how
The flock of notes those antique negroes blew
Out of Chicago air into
A huge remembering pre-electric horn
The year after I was born
Three decades later made this sudden bridge
From your unsatisfactory age
To my unsatisfactory prime.

Truly, though our element is time,
We are not suited to the long perspectives
Open at each instant of our lives.
They link us to our losses: worse,
They show us what we have as it once was,
Blindingly undiminished; just as though
By acting differently we could have kept it so.

—PHILIP LARKIN

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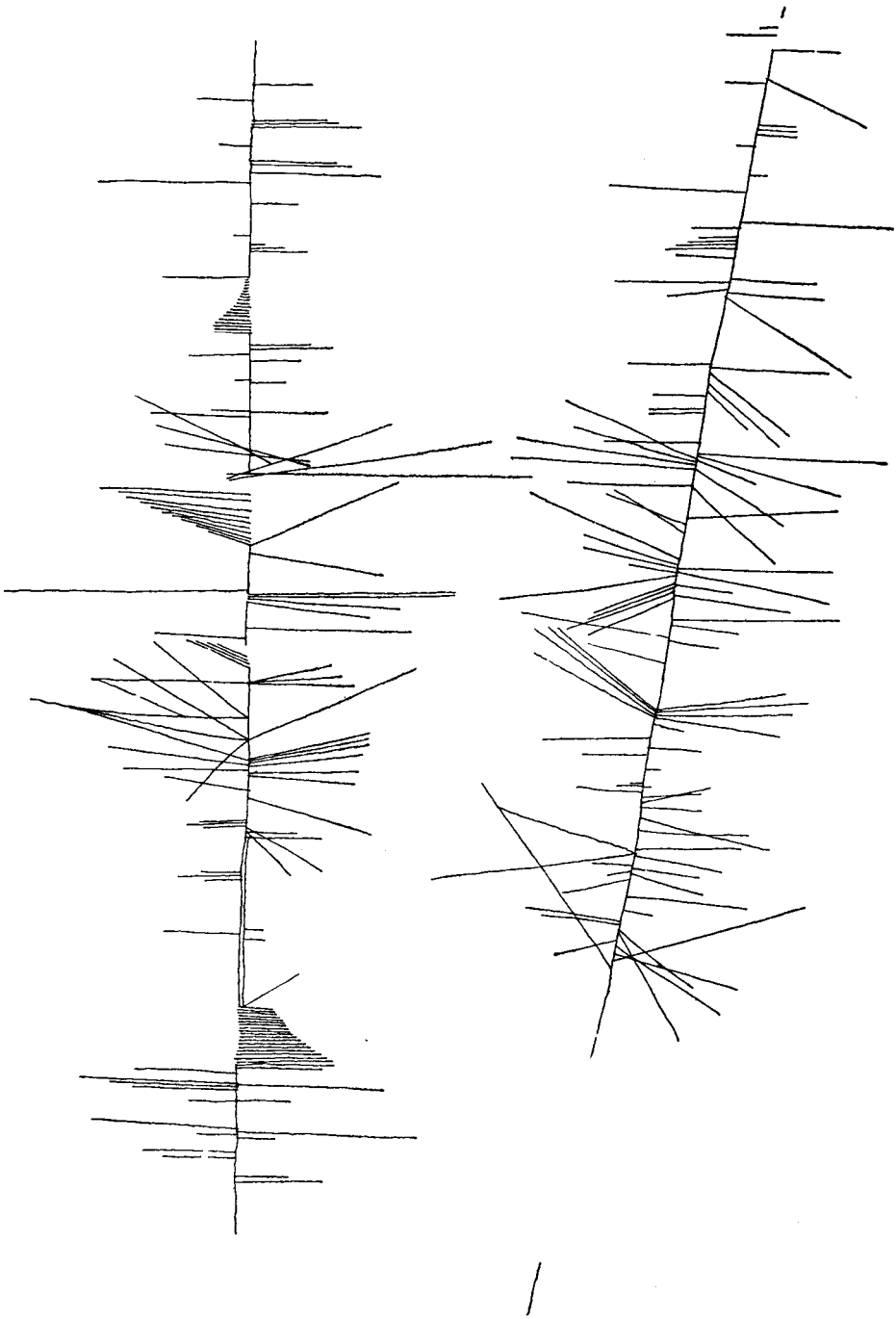

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GIAN BERTO VANNI was born in Rome in 1927. He first studied to be an architect but turned early to painting. His talent was immediately recognized and he received scholarships for travel to Holland and to America where he studied with Josef Albers at Yale. His first exhibition, given last year at the Gallery Schneider in Rome, was highly praised; his second will be presented this November at the Trabia Gallery in New York, where he now lives. Of Vanni, the noted French editor and writer, André Bay has said.

The son of a professor of biology, Vanni often gazed through his fathers' microscope at the world of the living cell. This world, both geometric and dynamic, was one of the sources of his inspiration. The fragile constructions of his pen seem like precise notations of the visible, rising from the impenetrable whiteness of the infinitely small. Later, Vanni' spins his delicate crystallography out into the night sky—the microscope is joined by the telescope, and the observer seems to see in these drawings familiar images threatened by nothingness and measureless space. Constantly developing, his work reveals the transmutation of original perceptions and values into an authentic art of great promise.

Vanni has said of his art. "I will be happy if my paintings carry with them no single emotion or effect—all emotions or none. The result should be an organized bundle of forms at once dynamic and immobile, never without a sense of enchantment."

—C.E.

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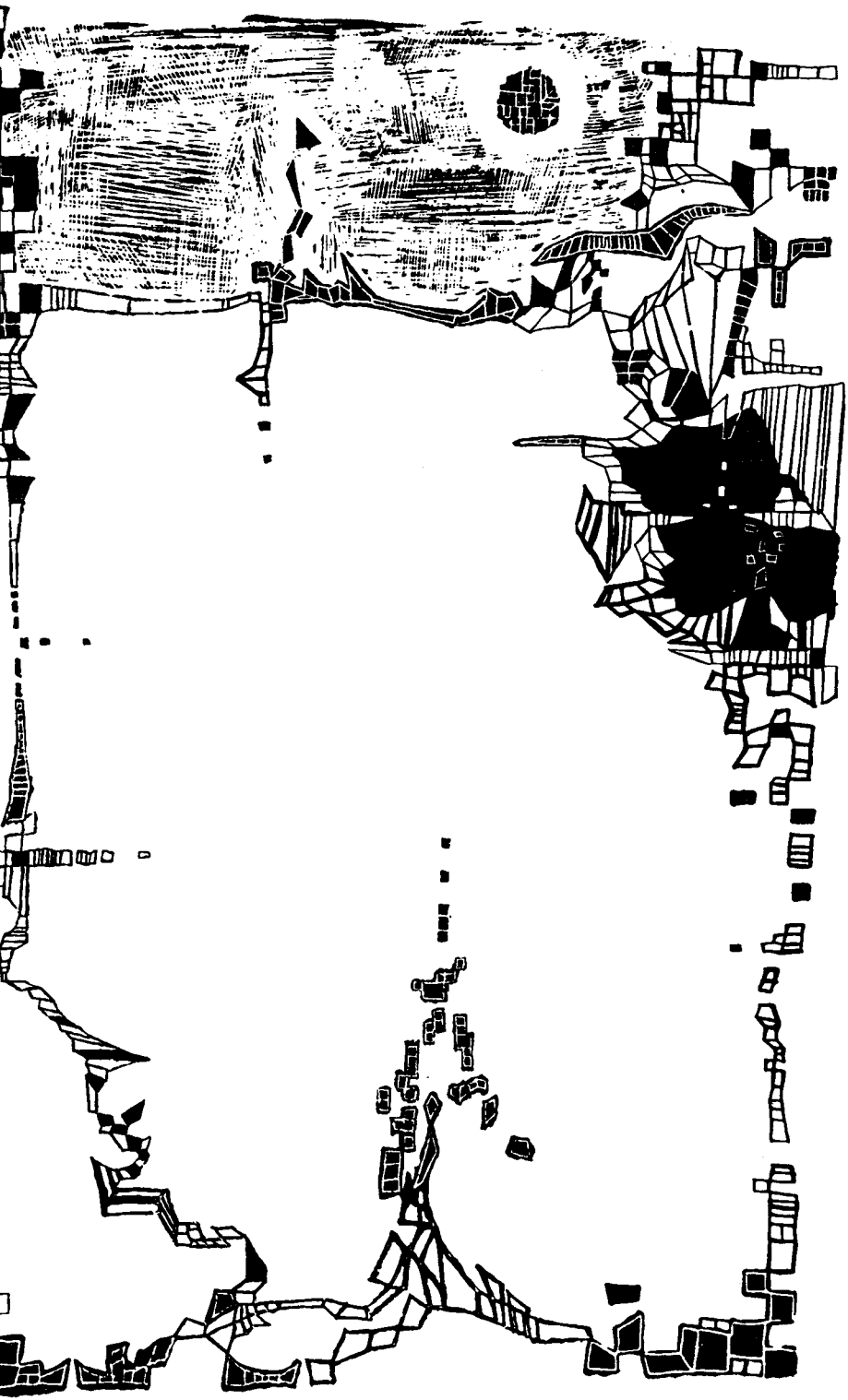

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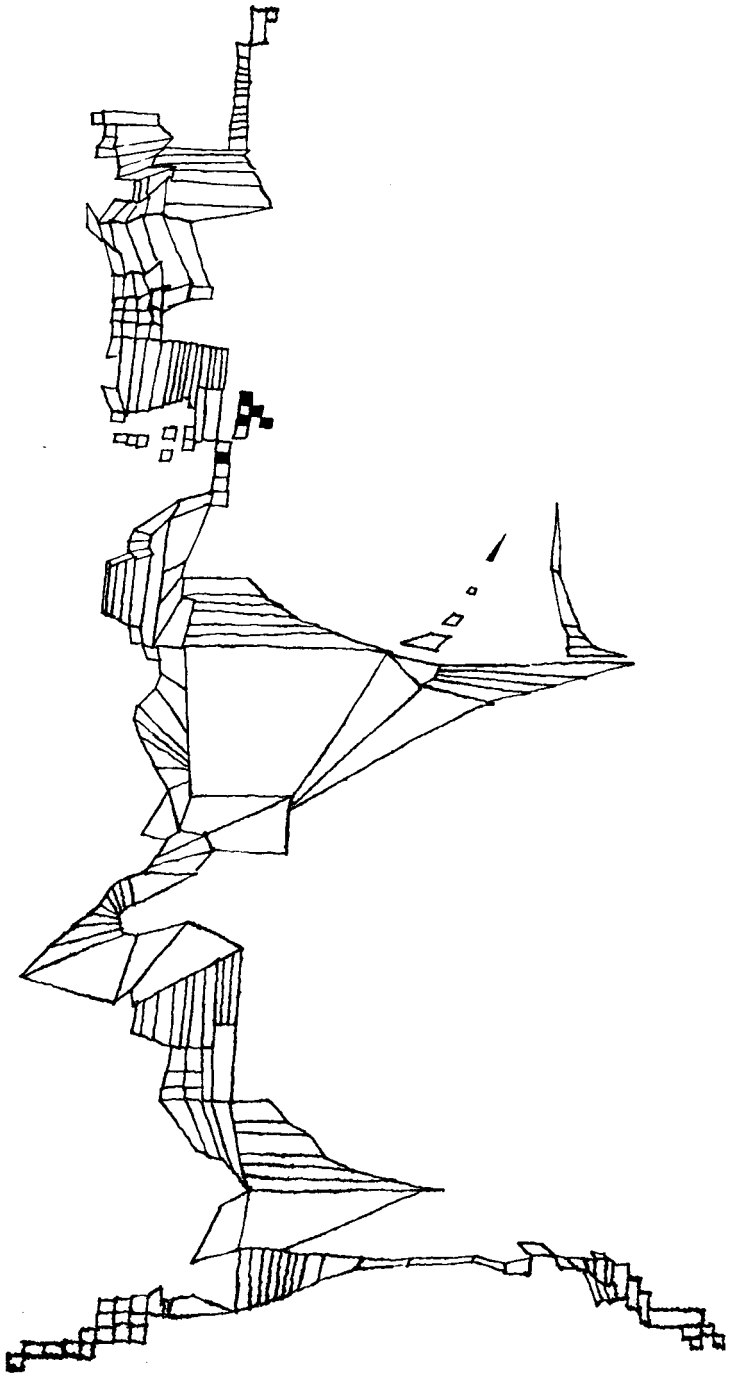

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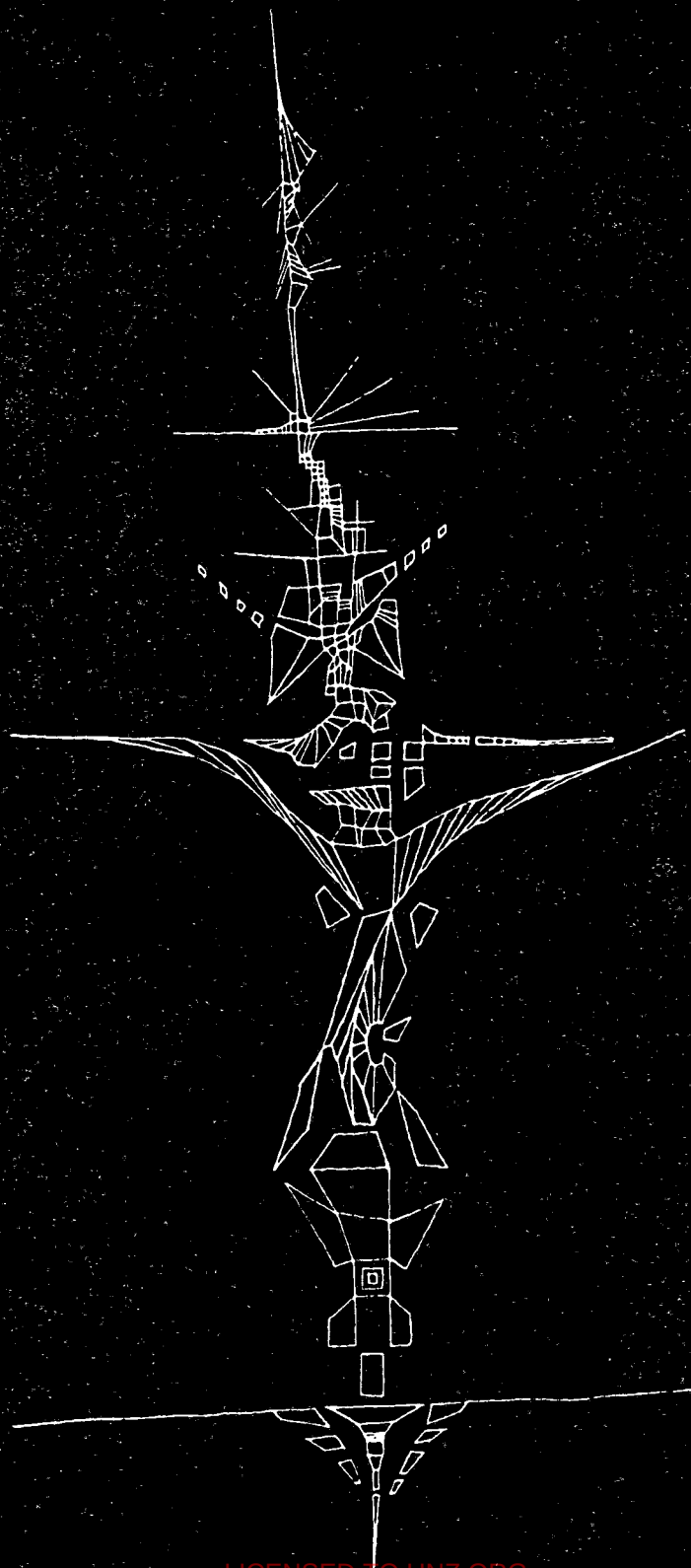

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TWO POEMS
BY HELEN PINKERTON

ERROR PURSUED

Satan in Eden was "constrain'd
Into a beast."
All of the proud, like him, are pained,
And you not least,
To wear the flesh of which we all are made.

It was a means for him and Christ.
Abler than we,
Each knew for what he sacrificed.
Carnality
Destroys when not accepted and allayed.

It is the gift of punishment
That you refuse.
You say you sin without consent,
And thus excuse
Self-pity and self-hate, even despair.

For self is faithless to its end.
Not wife or child
Will fail as badly, nor has friend
As soon beguiled.
It is your way, and you are most aware.

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AT JACKSON, MONTANA

The river was Missouri's farthest source—
So clear and shallow, even stones and sand,
Under that sun, seemed golden in its course.
Men came for gold. Some failed, but took the land.

My father fished here summers, scaled and cleaned
His catch by the grey weathered fence that dips
Into the river. Thin as pine he leaned
Again, to rinse the knife in chilling rips.

Sons of unsettled men sometimes remained
To change the land through labor and design.
He left, rejecting what he might have gained,
But only found another ore to mine.

The cold, denuded land, compelling pride,
Where I first saw as silver as its earth
Another stream flow west from the Divide,
Gave to him nothing of its final worth.

His quiet lapsed to taciturnity,
Slow anger to hard answers in a glance.
Music alone and its brief gaiety,
His father's gift, remained from circumstance.

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V. S. NAIPAUL

MY AUNT GOLD TEETH

I never knew her real name and it is quite likely that she did have one, though I never heard her called anything but Gold Teeth. She did, indeed, have gold teeth. She had sixteen of them. She had married early and she had married well, and shortly after her marriage she exchanged her perfectly sound teeth for gold ones, to announce to the world that her husband was a man of substance.

Even without her gold teeth my aunt would have been noticeable. She was short, scarcely five foot, and she was fat, horribly, monstrously fat. If you saw her in silhouette you would have found it difficult to know whether she was facing you or whether she was looking sideways.

She ate little and prayed much. Her family being Hindu, and her husband being a pundit, she too was an orthodox Hindu. Of Hinduism she knew little apart from the ceremonies and the taboos, and this was enough for her. Gold Teeth saw God as a Power, and religious ritual as a means of harnessing that Power for great practical good, her good.

I fear I may have given the impression that Gold Teeth prayed because she wanted to be less fat. The fact was that Gold Teeth had no children, and she was almost forty. It was her childlessness, not her fat, that oppressed her, and she prayed for the curse to be removed. She was willing to try any means—any ritual, any prayer—in order to trap and channel the supernatural Power.

And so it was that she began to indulge in surreptitious Christian practices.

She was living at the time in a country village called Cunupia, in County Caroni. Here the Canadian Mission had long waged war against the Indian heathen, and saved many. But

—Drawing by David Omar White

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Gold Teeth stood firm. The Minister of Cunupia expended his Presbyterian piety on her; so did the headmaster of the Mission school. But all in vain. At no time was Gold Teeth persuaded even to think about being converted. The idea horrified her. Her father had been in his day one of the best-known Hindu pundits, and even now her husband's fame as a pundit, as a man who could read and write Sanskrit, had spread far beyond Cunupia. She was in no doubt whatsoever that Hindus were the best people in the world, and that Hinduism was a superior religion. She was willing to select, modify and incorporate alien eccentricities into her worship; but to abjure her own faith—never!

Presbyterianism was not the only danger the good Hindu had to face in Cunupia. Besides, of course, the ever-present threat of open Muslem aggression, the Catholics were to be reckoned with. Their pamphlets were everywhere and it was hard to avoid them. In them Gold Teeth read of novenas and rosaries, of squads of saints and angels. These were things she understood and could even sympathize with, and they encouraged her to seek further. She read of the mysteries and the miracles, of penances and indulgences. Her scepticism sagged, and yielded to a quickening, if reluctant, enthusiasm.

One morning she took the train for the county town of Chaguanas, three miles, two stations and twenty minutes away. The church of St. Philip and St. James in Chaguanias stands imposingly at the end of the Caroni Savannah Road, and although Gold Teeth knew Chaguanas well, all she knew of the church was that it had a clock, at which she had glanced on her way to the Railway Station nearby. She had hitherto been far more interested in the drab ochre-washed edifice opposite, which was the Police Station.

She carried herself into the churchyard, awed by her own temerity, feeling like an explorer in a land of cannibals. To her relief, the church was empty. It was not as terrifying as she had expected. In the gilt and the images and the resplendent cloths she found much that reminded her of her Hindu temple. Her eyes caught a discreet sign: CANDLES TWO CENTS EACH. She undid the knot in the end of her veil, where she kept her money, took out three cents, popped them into the box,

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picked up a candle and muttered a prayer in Hindustani. A brief moment of elation gave way to a sense of guilt, and she was suddenly anxious to get away from the church as fast as her weight would let her.

She took a bus home, and hid the candle in her chest-of-drawers. She had half feared that her husband's Brahminical flair for clairvoyance would have uncovered the reason for her trip to Chaguanas. When after four days, which she spent in an ecstasy of prayer, her husband had mentioned nothing, Gold Teeth thought it safe to burn the candle. She burned it secretly, at night, before her Hindu images and sent up, as she thought, prayers of double efficacy.

Everyday her religious schizophrenia grew, and presently she began wearing a crucifix. Neither her husband nor her neighbours knew she did so. The chain was lost in the billows of fat around her neck, and the crucifix was itself buried in the valley of her gargantuan breasts. Later she acquired two holy pictures, one of the Virgin Mary, the other of the crucifixion, and took care to conceal them from her husband. The prayers she offered to these Christian things filled her with new hope and buoyancy. She became an addict of Christianity.

Then her husband, Ramprasad, fell ill.

Ramprasad's sudden, unaccountable illness alarmed Gold Teeth. It was, she knew, no ordinary illness, and she knew too that her religious transgression was the cause. The District Medical Officer at Chaguanas said it was diabetes but Gold Teeth knew better. To be on the safe side, though, she used the insulin he prescribed, and, to be even safer, she consulted Ganesh Pundit, the masseur with mystic leanings, celebrated as a faith-healer.

Ganesh came all the way from Feunte Grove to Cunupia. He came in great humility, anxious to serve Gold Teeth's husband, for Gold Teeth's husband was a Brahmin among Brahmins, a *Panday*, a man who knew all five Vedas; while he, Ganesh, was a mere *Chaubay* and knew only four.

With spotless white *koortah*, his dhoti cannily tied, and a tasselled green scarf as a concession to elegance, Ganesh exuded

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the confidence of the professional mystic. He looked at the sick man, observed his pallor, sniffed the air inquiringly. "This man," he said slowly, "is bewitched. Seven spirits are upon him."

He was telling Gold Teeth nothing she didn't know. She had known from the first that there were spirits in the affair, but she was glad that Ganesh had ascertained their number.

"But you mustn't worry," Ganesh added. "We will 'tie' the house—in spiritual bonds— and no spirit will be able to come in."

Then without being asked, Gold Teeth brought out a blanket, folded it, placed it on the floor and invited Ganesh to sit on it. Next she brought him a brass jar of fresh water, a mango leaf and a plate full of burning charcoal.

"Bring me some ghee," Ganesh said, and after Gold Teeth had done so, he set to work. Muttering continuously in Hindustani he sprinkled the water from the brass jar around him with the mango leaf. Then he melted the ghee in the fire and the charcoal hissed so sharply that Gold Teeth could not make out his words. Presently he rose and said, "You must put some of the ash of this fire on your husband's forehead, but if he doesn't want you to do that, mix it with his food. You must keep the water in this jar and place it every night before your front door."

Gold Teeth pulled her veil over her forehead.

Ganesh coughed. "That," he said, rearranging his scarf, "is all. There is nothing more I can do. God will do the rest."

He refused any payment for his services. It was enough honor, he said, for a man as humble as he was to serve Pundit Ramprasad, and she, Gold Teeth, had been singled out by fate to be the spouse of such a worthy man. Gold Teeth received the impression that Ganesh spoke from a first-hand knowledge of fate and its designs, and her heart, buried deep down under inches of mortal, flabby flesh, sank a little.

"Baba," she said hesitantly, "Revered father, I have something to say to you." But she couldn't say anything more and Ganesh, seeing this, filled his eyes with charity and love. "What is it, my child?"

"I have done a great wrong, Baba."

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"What sort of wrong?" he asked, and his tone indicated that Gold Teeth could do no wrong.

"I have prayed to Christian things."

And to Gold Teeth's surprise, Ganesh chuckled benevolently. "And do you think God minds, daughter? There is only one God and different people pray to Him in different ways. It doesn't matter how you pray, but God is pleased if you pray at all."

"So it is not because of me that my husband has fallen ill?"

"No, to be sure, daughter."

In his professional capacity Ganesh was consulted by people of many faiths, and with the licence of the mystic he had exploited the commodiousness of Hinduism, and made room for all beliefs. In this way he had many clients, as he called them, many satisfied clients.

Henceforward Gold Teeth not only pasted Ramprasad's pale forehead with the sacred ash Ganesh had prescribed, but mixed substantial amounts with his food. Ramprasad's appetite, enormous even in sickness, diminished; and he shortly entered into a visible and alarming decline that mystified his wife.

She fed him more ash than before, and when it was exhausted and Ramprasad perilously macerated, she fell back on the Hindu wife's last resort. She took her husband home to her mother. That venerable lady, my grandmother, lived with us in Port of Spain, in Woodbrook.

Ramprasad was tall and skeletal, and his face was grey. The virile voice that had expounded a thousand theological points and recited a hundred *puranas* was now a wavering whisper. We cooped him up in a room called, oddly, 'the pantry'. It had never been used as a pantry and one can only assume that the architect, in the idealistic manner of his tribe, had so designated it some forty years before. It was a tiny room. If you wished to enter the pantry you were compelled, as soon as you opened the door, to climb on to the bed: it fitted the room to a miracle. The lower half of the walls were concrete, the upper close lattice-work; there were no windows.

My grandmother had her doubts about the suitability of the

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room for a sick man. She was worried about the lattice-work. It let in air and light, and Ramprasad was not going to die from these things if she could help it. With card-board, oil-cloth and canvas she made the lattice-work air-proof and light-proof.

And, sure enough, within a week Ramprasad's appetite returned, insatiable and insistent as before. My grandmother claimed all the credit for this, though Gold Teeth knew that ash she had fed him had not been without effect. Then she realized with horror that she had ignored a very important thing. The house in Cunupia had been tied and no spirits could enter, but the house in Woodbrook had been given no such protection and any spirit could come and go as it chose. The problem was pressing.

Ganesh was out of the question. By giving his services free, he had made it impossible for Gold Teeth to call him in again. But thinking in this way of Ganesh, she remembered his words: "It doesn't matter how you pray, but God is pleased if you pray at all."

Why not, then, bring Christianity into play again?

She didn't want to take any chances this time. She decided to tell Ramprasad.

He was propped up in bed, and eating. When Gold Teeth opened the door, he stopped eating and blinked at the unwonted light. Gold Teeth, stepping into the doorway and filling it, shadowed the room once more and he went on eating. She placed the palms of her hands on the bed. It creaked.

"Man," she said.

Ramprasad continued to eat.

"Man," she said in English, "I thinking about going to the chu'ch to pray. You never know, and it better to be on the safe side. After all, the house here aint tied—"

"I don't want you to pray in no chu'ch," he whispered, in English too.

Gold Teeth did the only thing she could do. She began to cry.

Three days in succession she asked his permission to go to church, and his opposition weakened in the face of her tears. He was now, besides, too weak to oppose anything. Although his appetite had returned he was still very ill and very weak, and every day his condition became worse.

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On the fourth day he said to Gold Teeth, "Well, pray to Jesus and go to chu'ch if it will put your mind at rest."

And Gold Teeth straight away set about putting her mind at rest. Every morning she took the trolley bus to the Holy Rosary Church, to offer worship in her private way. Then she was emboldened to bring a crucifix and pictures of the Virgin and the Messiah into the house. We were all somewhat worried by this, but Gold Teeth's religious nature was well known to us, her husband was a learned pundit and when all was said and done this was an emergency, a matter of life and death. So we could do nothing but look on. Incense and camphor and ghee burned now before the likenesses of Krishna and Shiva as well as Mary and Jesus. Gold Teeth revealed an appetite for prayer that equalled her husband's for food, and we marvelled at both, if only because neither prayer nor food seemed to be of any use to Ramprasad.

One evening, shortly after bell and gong and conch-shell had announced that Gold Teeth's official devotions were almost over, a sudden chorus of lamentation burst over the house, and I was summoned to the room reserved for prayer. "Come quickly, something dreadful has happened to your aunt."

The prayer-room, still heavy with the fumes of incense, presented an extraordinary sight. Before the Hindu shrine, flat on her face, Gold Teeth lay prostrate, rigid as a sack of flour, a large amorphous mass. I had only seen Gold Teeth standing or sitting, and the aspect of Gold Teeth prostrate, so novel and so grotesque, was disturbing.

My grandmother, an alarmist by nature, bent down and put her ear to the upper half of the body on the floor. "I don't seem to hear her heart," she said.

We were all somewhat terrified. We tried to lift Gold Teeth but she seemed as heavy as lead. Then, slowly, the body quivered. The flesh beneath the clothes rippled, then billowed, and the children in the room sharpened their shrieks. Instinctively we all stood back from the body and waited to see what was going to happen. Gold Teeth's hand began to pound the floor and at the same time she began to gurgle.

My grandmother had grasped the situation. "She's got the spirit," she said.

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At the word 'spirit', the children shrieked louder, and my grandmother slapped them into silence.

The gurgling resolved itself into words pronounced with a lingering ghastly quaver. "Hail Mary, Hara Ram," Gold Teeth said, "the snakes are after me. Everywhere snakes. Seven snakes. Rama! Rama! Full of grace. Seven spirits leaving Cunupia by the four o'clock train for Port of Spain."

My grandmother and my mother listened eagerly, their faces lit up with pride. I was rather ashamed at the exhibition, and annoyed with Gold Teeth for putting me into a fright. I moved towards the door.

"Who is that going away? Who is the young *daffar*, the unbeliever?" the voice asked abruptly.

"Come back quickly, boy," my grandmother whispered, "Come back and ask her pardon."

I did as I was told.

"It is all right, son," Gold Teeth replied, "You don't know. You are young."

Then the spirit appeared to leave her. She wrenched herself up to a sitting position and wondered why we were all there. For the rest of that evening she behaved as if nothing had happened and she pretended she didn't notice that everyone was looking at her and treating her with unusual respect.

"I have always said it, and I will say it again," my grandmother said, "that these Christians are very religious people. That is why I encouraged Gold Teeth to pray to Christian things."

Ramprasad died early next morning and we had the announcement on the radio after the local news at one o'clock. Ramprasad's death was the only one announced and so, although it came between commercials, it made some impression. We buried him that afternoon in Mucurapo Cemetry.

As soon as we got back my grandmother said, "I have always said it, and I will say it again: I don't like these Christian things. Ramprasad would have got better if only you, Gold Teeth, had listened to me and not gone running after these Christian things."

Gold Teeth sobbed her assent; and her body squabbered

—Drawing by George Thompson

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and shook as she confessed the whole story of her trafficking with Christianity. We listened in astonishment and shame. We didn't know that a good Hindu, and a member of our family, could sink so low. Gold Teeth beat her breast and pulled ineffectually at her long hair and begged to be forgiven. "It is all my fault," she cried. "My own fault, Ma. I fell in a moment of weakness. Then I just couldn't stop."

My grandmother's shame turned to pity. "It's all right, Gold Teeth. Perhaps it was this you needed to bring you back to your senses."

That evening Gold Teeth ritually destroyed every reminder of Christianity in the house.

"You have only yourself to blame," my grandmother said, "if you have no children now to look after you."

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AMSTERDAM

'Au pays qui te ressemble'

There is a city whose fair houses wizen
In a strict web of streets, of waterways
In which the clock tower gurgles and sways,
And there desire is freed from the body's prison.

Into a black impasse deep in the maze
A mirror thrusts her brilliant severed head,
Mouth red and moist, and pale curls diamonded.
A youth advances towards the wraith, delays,

Squints through the window at a rumpled bed,
Cat, the familiar, lolling on batik,
The leman's person now no more unique
Than any hovel uninhabited,

Then turns, leaving her wrappered in a reek
Of realism, back the way he came.
Her jewels rekindle in their sooty frame
Lights for a future sleuth of the oblique.

(Once, once only to have laid absolute claim
Upon that love long held in readiness,
Not by the flesh in all its stale undress,
Nor by the faithful ghost whose lips inflame

Lips curling dry, licked once to evanesce;
One night one autumn, so to have taken hold
Of certain volumes violent yet controlled
As to leave nothing for regret, unless

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A strand of hair, pale auburn touched with gold
On the creased cushion, being what you must bear,
Guided the passion to its hush, like prayer,
And paler, cooler, tapered, as foretold,

Into the sheer gold of nobody's hair,
The fragrance of whatever we suppose
Wafted, as music over water flows
Into the darkened sleeper, now elsewhere.)

Next day, is it myself whose image those
Sunning their own on the canal's far side
Are smiling to see reel at the downglide
Of one leaf, wallow, painfully recompose?

My head has fallen forward open-eyed.
Word of somebody's Schumann—'like a swan
That breasts a torrent of obsidian'—
Idles below me in formaldehyde.

Have I become my senses, all else gone?
A warm gust from the luxurious act
Interrupts reflection, leaves it tracked
With dust, like water sunlight moves upon.

By dark the world is once again intact,
Or so the mirrrors, wiped clean, try to reason...
O little moons, misshapen but arisen
To blind with the emotions they refract!

—JAMES MERRILL

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TWO POEMS
BY ALLEN GROSSMAN

WITHOUT WATCHERS WE ARE NOT SAFE

I will not sleep.
Men sleep and the beasts sleep, and no one watches.
The paid watchmen going their rounds
Are drowsy or a little drunk. They cannot be depended on.
The night shift in the upstairs shop lounges on the window
sill.
He has his dreams. I must watch for him.
The circuits are all alive, but there is no one to give warning.
Without watchers we are not safe.

From minute to minute the machine may stop;
Therefore each minute is a question and must be
scrutinized.
Those who are awake in the night know what they are
looking for:
The bombers coming over the pole that will make an end
For a time, but not of time;
The sick that die out of the world, and the newly
conceived
That come crying into it, and commence at once their
listening
To the tick of the heart.
I alone do not know what I am listening for.
If I should sleep the world would be given up to its utmost
danger.

Beyond the tree tops and the clouds
Beyond the moon and the stars is the dark end of the path
of sight.
Should an angel come he would require greeting and
refreshment
After his long journey.

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Behind this night and the last, and all my nights and days
that have been

Is the dark end of the path of remembering.
Should death come he would require his honors and his
obsequies.
What is wanted of us is to watch unceasingly and without
hope,
To take longing as a sign and ignorance as a great gospel.
But I am sleepy, and the ramparts are unmanned.
Dreamers, awake.

THE HOUSEHOLDER AWAKES

The light is a grinder of knives jangling his bells
For seven in the morning. He is all the steeples
In the town calling for whatever this day must be new made.
I have my death to grind, that blazing blade.
But light in this dead-end is dim, and bells
Are bound to the wheel of the world, no ringing
In between for marriages or just for the sake of singing.
Light, light, set up your wheel, and ply your trade.
Mount to your seat and whirl your stone. Strike sparks
That rise and disappear like waking larks.
Hone it sharp, and shine it till it shows my face
For death is a race run in a single place
And death must know the heart, and have no fears.
The day is for dying; darkness has no doors.

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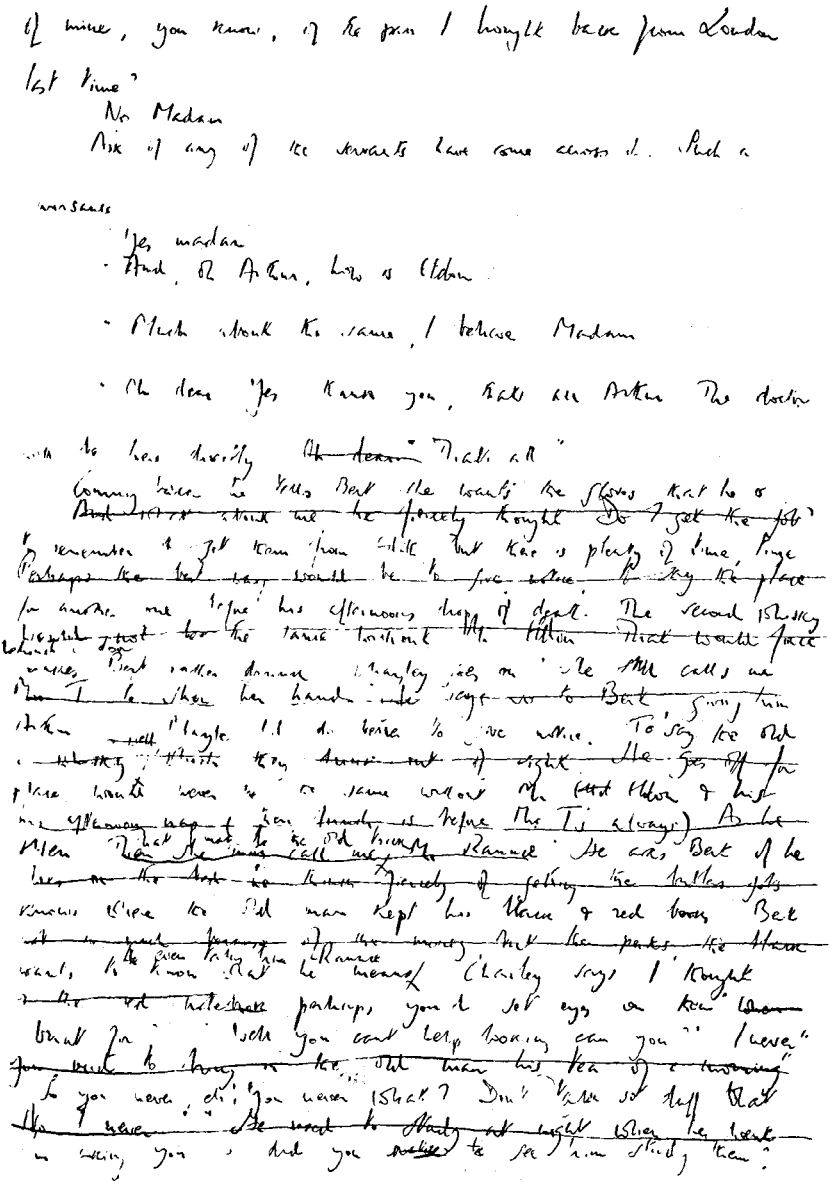

A draft for Henry Green's novel, LOVING. *The conversation at the top of the page is between Raunce, the hero of the book, and his employer who is here addressing him as Arthur, not because that it his name but because her footmen have always been called Arthur.*

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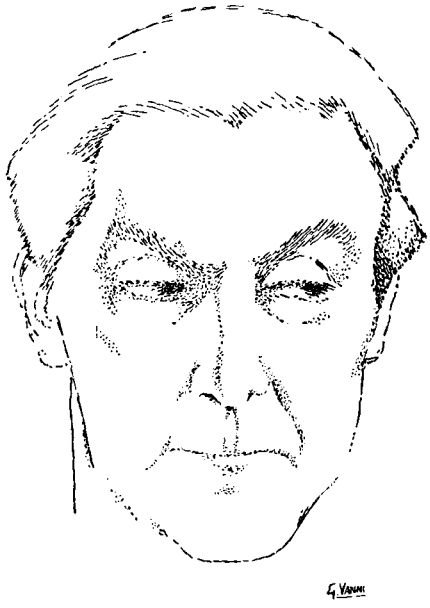

THE ART OF FICTION XXII

HENRY GREEN

Henry Green is the pseudonym of H. V. Yorke, the London-Birmingham industrialist whom W. H. Auden has said to be the best English novelist alive.

Mr. Green wrote his first novel, *Blindness*, while still a schoolboy at Eton, and this has been followed by nine more. Of his life otherwise, he has noted:

I was born in 1905 in a large house by the banks of the river Severn, in England, and within the sound of the bells from the Abbey Church at Tewkesbury. Some children are sent away to school; I went at six and three-quarters and did not stop till I was twenty-two, by which time I was at Oxford, but the holidays were all fishing. And then there was billiards.

I was sent at twelve and a half to Eton and almost at once became what was then called an aesthete, that is a boy who con-

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sciously dressed to shock. I stayed that way at Oxford. From Oxford I went into the family business, an engineering works in the Midlands, with its iron and brass foundries and machine shops. After working through from the bottom I eventually came to the top where for the time being I remain, married, living in London, with one son.

Mr. Green is a tall, gracious, and imposingly handsome man, with a warm strong voice and very quick eyes. In speech he displays on occasion that hallmark of English public school, the slight tilt of the head and closing of eyes when pronouncing the first few words of some sentences—a manner most often in contrast to what he is saying, for his expressions tend toward parable and his wit may move from cozy to scorpion-dry in less than a twinkle. Many have remarked that his celebrated deafness will roar or falter according to his spirit and situation; at any rate he will not use a hearing-aid, for reasons of his own, though no doubt discernable to some.

Mr. Green writes at night and in many longhand drafts.

His novels, by date of publication, are: *Blindness* (1926), *Living* (1929), *Party-Going* (1939), *Pack My Bag* (1940), *Caught* (1943), *Loving* (1945), *Back* (1946), *Concluding* (1948), *Nothing* (1950), and *Doting* (1952).

In his autobiographical novel, *Pack My Bag*, he has described prose in this way:

Prose is not to be read aloud but to oneself at night, and it is not quick as poetry, but rather a gathering web of insinuations which go further than names however shared can ever go. Prose should be a long intimacy between strangers with no direct appeal to what both may have known. It should slowly appeal to feelings unexpressed, it should in the end draw tears out of the stone.

An ancient trade-compliment, to an author whose technique is highly developed, has been to call him a "writer's writer;" Henry Green has been referred to as a "writer's-writer's writer," though practitioners of the craft have had only to talk with him momentarily on the subject to know that his methods were not likely to be revealed to them, either then or at any other time. It is for this reason—

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attempting to delve past his steely reticence—that some of the questions in the interview would seem unduly long or presumptious.

Mr. Green lives in London, in a house in Knightsbridge, with a beautiful and charming wife named Dig. The following conversation was recorded there, one winter night, in the author's fire-lit study.

* * *

INTERVIEWER

Now you have a body of work, ten novels, which many critics consider the most elusive and enigmatic in contemporary literature—and yourself, professionally, or as a personality, nonetheless so. I'm wondering if these two mysteries are merely coincidental?

MR. GREEN

What's that? I'm a trifle hard of hearing.

INTERVIEWER

Well, I'm referring to such things as your use of a pseudonym, your refusal to be photographed, and so on. May I ask the reason for it?

MR. GREEN

I didn't want my business associates to know I wrote novels. Most of them do now though...*know* I mean, not write, thank goodness.

INTERVIEWER

And has this affected your relationships with them?

MR. GREEN

Yes, yes, oh yes—why some years ago a group at our Birmingham works put in a penny each and bought a copy of a book of mine—*Living*. And as I was going round the iron-foundry one day, a loam-moulder said to me: "I read

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your book, Henry." "And did you like it?" I asked, rightly apprehensive. He replied: "I didn't think much of it, Henry." Too awful.

Then you know, with a customer, at the end of a settlement which has deteriorated into a compromise painful to both sides, he may say: "I suppose you are going to put this in a novel." Very awkward.

INTERVIEWER

I see.

MR. GREEN

Yes, it's best they shouldn't know about one. And one should never be known by sight.

INTERVIEWER

You have however been photographed from the rear.

MR. GREEN

And a wag said: "I'd know that back anywhere."

INTERVIEWER

I've heard it remarked that your work is "too sophisticated" for American readers, in that it offers no scenes of violence—and "too subtle," in that its message is somewhat veiled. What do you say?

MR. GREEN

Unlike the wilds of Texas, there is very little violence over here. A bit of child-killing of course, but no straight-shootin'. After fifty, one ceases to digest; as someone once said: "I just ferment my food now." Most of us walk crabwise to meals and everything else. The oblique approach in middle-age is the safest thing. The unusual at this period is to get anywhere at all—God damn!

INTERVIEWER

And how about "subtle"?

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MR. GREEN

I don't follow. *Suttee*, as I understand it, is the suicide—now forbidden—of a Hindu wife on her husband's flaming bier. I don't want my wife to do that when my time comes—and with great respect, as I know her, she won't...

INTERVIEWER

I'm sorry, you misheard me; I said, "subtle"—that the message was too subtle.

MR. GREEN

Oh, *subtle*. How dull!

INTERVIEWER

... yes, well now I believe that two of your novels, *Blindness* and *Pack My Bag*, are said to be "autobiographical", isn't that so?

MR. GREEN

Yes, those two are mostly autobiographical. But where they are about myself, they are not necessarily accurate as a portrait; they aren't photographs. After all, no one knows what he is like, he just tries to give some sort of picture of his time. Not like a cat to fight its image in the mirror.

INTERVIEWER

The critic Alan Pryce-Jones has compared you to Jouhandeau and called you an "odd, haunted, ambiguous writer." Did you know that?

MR. GREEN

I was in the same house with him at Eton. He was younger than me, so he saw through me perhaps.

INTERVIEWER

Do you find critical opinion expressed about your work useful or interesting?

MR. GREEN

Invariably useless and uninteresting—when it is of daily

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papers or weeklies which give so little space nowadays. But there is a man called Edward Stokes who has written a book about me and who knows all too much. I believe the Hogarth Press is going to publish it. And then the French translator of *Loving*, he wrote two articles in some French monthly. Both of these are valuable to me.

INTERVIEWER

I'd like to ask you some questions now about the work itself. You've described your novels as "*non-representational.*" I wonder if you'd mind defining that term?

MR. GREEN

"*Non-representational*" was meant to represent a picture which was not a photograph, nor a painting *on a photograph*, nor, in dialogue, a tape-recording. For instance the very deaf, as I am, hear the most astounding things all round them, which have not, in fact, been said. This enlivens my replies until, through mishearing, a new level of communication is reached. My characters misunderstand each other more than people do in real life, yet they do so less than I. Thus when writing, I "represent" very closely what I see (and I'm not seeing so well now) and what I hear (which is little) but I say it is "non-representational" because it is not necessarily what others see and hear.

INTERVIEWER

And yet, as I understand this theory, its success does not depend upon any actual sensory differences between people talking, but rather upon psychological or emotional differences between them as readers, isn't that so? I'm referring to the serious use of this theory in communicative writing.

MR. GREEN

People strike sparks off each other, that is what I try to note down. But mark well, they only do this when they are talking together. After all we don't write letters now, we telephone. And one of these days we are going to have TV sets

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which lonely people can talk to and get answers back. Then no one will read anymore.

INTERVIEWER

And that is your crabwise approach.

MR. GREEN

To your question, yes. And to stop one's asking why I don't write *plays*, my answer is I'd rather have these sparks in black and white than liable to interpretation by actors and the producer of a piece.

INTERVIEWER

Do you consider that all your novels have been done as "non-representational"?

MR. GREEN

Yes, they all of course represent a *selection* of material. The Chinese classical painters used to leave out the middle distance. Until *Nothing* and *Doting* I tried to establish the mood of any scene by a few but highly pointed descriptions. Since then I've tried to keep everything down to bare dialogue and found it very difficult. You see, to get back to what you asked a moment ago, when you referred to the emotional differences between readers—what one writes has to be all things to all men. If one isn't enough to enough readers they stop reading and the publishers won't publish any more. To disprove my own rule I've done a very funny three-act play and no one will put it on.

INTERVIEWER

I'm sorry to hear that, but now what about the role of *humor* in the novel?

MR. GREEN

Just the old nursery-rhyme—"Something and spice makes all things nice," is it? Surely the artist must entertain. And one's in a very bad way indeed if one can't laugh. Laughter

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relaxes the characters in a novel. And if you *can* make the reader laugh he is apt to get careless and go on reading. So you as the writer get a chance to get something into him.

INTERVIEWER

I see, and what might that something be?

MR. GREEN

Here we approach the crux of the matter which, like all hilarious things, is almost indescribable. To me the purpose of art is to produce something alive, in my case, in print, but with a separate, and of course one hopes, with an everlasting life on its own.

INTERVIEWER

And the qualities then of a work-of-art...

MR. GREEN

To be alive. To have a real life of its own. The miracle is that it should live in the person who reads it. And if it *is* real and true it does, for five hundred years, for generation after generation. It's like having a baby, but in print. If it's really good, you can't stop its living. Indeed once the thing is printed, you simply cannot strangle it, as you could a child, by putting your hands round its little wet neck.

INTERVIEWER

What would you say goes into creating this life, into making this thing real and true?

MR. GREEN

Getting oneself straight. To get what one produces to have a real life of its own.

INTERVIEWER

Now this page of manuscript you were good enough to show me—what stage of the finished work does this represent?

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MR. GREEN

Probably a very early draft.

INTERVIEWER

In this draft I see that the dialogue has been left untouched, whereas every line in the scene otherwise has been completely rewritten.

MR. GREEN

I think if you checked with other fragments of this draft you would find as many the other way around, the dialogue corrected and the rest left untouched.

INTERVIEWER

Here the rewriting has been done in entire sentences, rather than in words or phrases—is that generally the way you work?

MR. GREEN

Yes, because I copy everything out afresh. I make alterations in the manuscript and then copy them out. And in copying out, I make further alterations.

INTERVIEWER

How much do you usually write before you begin rewriting?

MR. GREEN

The first twenty pages over and over again—because in my idea you have to get everything into them. So as I go along and the book develops, I have to go back to that beginning again and again. Otherwise I rewrite only when I read where I've got to in the book and I find something so bad I can't go on till I've put it right.

INTERVIEWER

When you begin to write something, do you begin with a certain *character* in mind, or rather with a certain *situation* in mind?

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MR. GREEN

Situation every time.

INTERVIEWER

Is that necessarily the *opening* situation—or perhaps you could give me an example; what was the basic situation, as it occurred to you, for *Loving?*

MR. GREEN

I got the idea of *Loving* from a manservant in the Fire Service during the war. He was serving with me in the ranks and he told me he had once asked the elderly butler who was over him what the old boy most liked in the world. The reply was: "Lying in bed on a summer morning, with the window open, listening to the church bells, eating buttered toast with cunty fingers." I saw the book in a flash.

INTERVIEWER

Well, now after getting your initial situation in mind, then what thought do you give to plot beyond it?

MR. GREEN

It's all a question of length; that is, of proportion. How much you allow to this or that is what makes a book now. It was not so in the days of the old three-decker novel. As to plotting or thinking ahead, I don't in a novel. I let it come page by page, one a day, and carry it in my head. When I say carry I mean the *proportions*—that is, the length. This is the exhaustion of creating. Towards the end of the book your head is literally bursting. But try and write out a scheme or plan and you will only depart from it. My way you have a chance to set something living.

INTERVIEWER

No one, it seems, has been able to satisfactorily relate your work to any source of influence. I recall that Mr. Pritchett has tried to place it in the tradition of Sterne, Carroll, Firbank, and Virginia Woolf—whereas Mr. Toynbee wished

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to relate it to Joyce, Thomas Wolfe, and Henry Miller. Now, *are* there styles or works that you feel have influenced yours.

MR. GREEN

I really don't know. As far as I'm consciously aware I forget everything I read at once including my own stuff. But I have a tremendous admiration for Celine.

INTERVIEWER

I feel there are certain aspects of your work, the mechanics of which aren't easily drawn into question because I don't find terms to cover them. I would like to try to state one however and see if you feel it is correct or can be clarified. It's something Mr. Pritchett seems to hint at when he describes you as "a psychologist poet making people out of blots," and it has to do with the degree to which you've developed the "non-existence-of-author" principle. The reader does not simply forget that there is an author behind the words, but because of some annoyance over a seeming "discrepancy" in the story must, in fact, *remind* himself that there is one. This reminding is accompanied by an irritation with the author because of these apparent oversights on his part, and his "failings" to see the particular *significance* of certain happenings. The irritation gives way then to a feeling of pleasure and superiority in that he, the reader, sees *more* in the situation than the author does—so that all of this now belongs to *him*. And the author is dismissed, even perhaps with a slight contempt—and only the *work* remains, alone now with this reader who has had to take over. Thus, in the spell of his own imagination the characters and story *come alive* in an almost incredible way, quite beyond anything achieved by conventional methods of writing. Now this is a principle that occurs in Kafka's work, in an undeveloped way, but is obscured because the situations are so strongly fantasy. It occurs in a very pure form however in Kafka's *Journals*—if one assumes that they were, despite all said to the contrary, *written to be read*, then it is quite apparent, and, of course, very funny and engaging indeed. I'm wondering if that is the scource of this principle for you, or if, in fact, you agree with what I say about it?

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MR. GREEN

I don't agree about Kafka's *Journals*, which I have by my bed and still don't or can't follow.

But if you are trying to write something which has a life of its own, which is alive, of course the author must keep completely out of the picture. I hate the portraits of donors in medieval tryptiches. And if the novel *is* alive of course the reader will be irritated by discrepancies—life, after all, is one discrepancy after another.

INTERVIEWER

Do you believe that a writer should work toward the development of a particular *style?*

MR. GREEN

He can't do anything else. His style is himself, and we are all of us changing every day—developing, we hope! We leave our marks behind us like a snail.

INTERVIEWER

So the writer's style develops with him.

MR. GREEN

Surely. But he must take care not to let it go too far—like the later Henry James or James Joyce. Because it then becomes a private communication with himself, like a man making cat's cradles with spider's webs, a sort of Melanesian gambit.

INTERVIEWER

Concerning your own style and the changes it has undergone, I'd like to read a sample paragraph—from *Living*, written in 1928—and ask you something about it. This paragraph occurs, you may perhaps recall, as the description of a girl's dream—a working-class girl who wants more than anything else a home, and above all, a child...

"Then clocks in that town all over town struck 3 and bells in churches there ringing started rushing sound of bells

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like wings tearing under roof of sky, so these bells rang. But women stood, reached up children drooping to sky, sharp boned, these women wailed and their noise rose and ate the noise of bells ringing."

I'd like to ask about the style here, about the absence of common articles—*a*, *an*, and *the*—there being but one in the whole paragraph, which is fairly representative of the book. Was this omission of articles throughout *Living* based on any particular theory?

MR. GREEN

I wanted to make that book as taut and spare as possible, to fit the proletarian life I was then leading. So I hit on leaving out the articles. I still think it effective, but would not do it again. It may now seem, I'm afraid, affected.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think that an elliptical method like that has a function other than, as you say, suggesting the tautness and spareness of a particular situation?

MR. GREEN

I don't know, I suppose the more you leave out, the more you highlight what you leave in—not true of taking the filling out of a sandwich, of course—but if one kept a diary, one wouldn't want a minute-to-minute catalogue of one's dreadful day.

INTERVIEWER

Well, that was written in 1928—were you influenced toward that style by *Ulysses?*

MR. GREEN

No. There's no "stream of consciousness" in any of my books that I can remember—I did not read *Ulysses* until *Living* was finished.

INTERVIEWER

That was your second novel, and that novel seems quite

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apart stylistically from the first and from those that followed —almost all of which, while "inimitably your own," so to speak, are of striking diversity in tone and style. Of them though, I think *Back* and *Pack My Bag* have a certain similarity, as have *Loving* and *Concluding*. Then again, *Nothing* and *Doting* might be said to be similiar in that, for one thing at least, they're both composed of...what would you say, *ninety-five* percent?...ninety-five percent *dialogue*.

MR. GREEN

Nothing and *Doting* are about the upper classes—and so is *Pack My Bag*, but it is nostalgia in this one, and too, in *Back*, which is about the middle class. Nostalgia has to have its own style. *Nothing* and *Doting* are hard and sharp; *Back* and *Pack My Bag*, soft.

INTERVIEWER

You speak of "classes" now, and I recall that *Living* has been described as the "best proletarian novel ever written." Is there to your mind then a social-awareness responsibility for the writer or artist?

MR. GREEN

No, no. The writer must be disengaged or else he is writing politics. Look at the Soviet writers.

I just wrote what I heard and saw, and, as I've told you, the workers in my factory thought it rotten. It was my very good friend Christopher Isherwood used that phrase you've just quoted and I don't know that he ever worked in a factory.

INTERVIEWER

Concerning the future of the novel, what do you think is the outlook for the Joycean-type introspective style, and, on the other hand, for the Kafka school?

MR. GREEN

I think Joyce and Kafka have said the last word on each

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of the two forms they developed. There's no one to follow them. They're like cats which have licked the plate clean. You've got to dream up another dish if you're to be a writer.

INTERVIEWER

Do you believe that films and television will radically alter the format of the novel?

MR. GREEN

It might be better to ask if novels will continue to be written. It's impossible for a novelist not to look out for other media nowadays. It isn't that everything has been done in fiction—truly nothing has been done as yet, save Fielding, and he only started it all. It is simply that the novelist is a communicator and must therefore be interested in any form of communication. You don't dictate to a girl now, you use a recording apparatus; no one faints anymore, they have blackouts; in Geneva you don't kill someone by cutting his throat, you blow a poisoned dart through a tube and *zing* you've got him. Media change. We don't have to paint chapels like Cocteau, but at the same time we must all be ever on the lookout for the new ways.

INTERVIEWER

What do you say about the use of symbolism?

MR. GREEN

You can't escape it can you? What after all is one to do with oneself in print? Does the reader feel a dread of anything? Do they all feel a dread for different things? Do they all love differently? Surely the only way to cover all these readers is to use what is called symbolism.

INTERVIEWER

It seems that you've used the principle of "non-existent author" in conjunction with another—that since identified with Camus, and called the *absurd*. For a situation to be, in this literary sense, genuinely *absurd*, it must be convincingly

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arrived at, and should not be noticed by readers as being at all out of the ordinary. Thus it would seem *normal* for a young man, upon the death of his father, to go down and take over the family's iron-foundry, as in *Living;* or to join the service in war-time, as in *Caught;* or to return from the war, as in *Back*—and yet, in abrupt transitions like these, the situations and relationships which result are almost sure to be, despite any dramatic or beautiful moments, fundamentally *absurd.* In your work I believe this reached such a high point of refinement in *Loving* as to be indiscernable—for, with all the critical analyses that book received, no one called attention to the absurdity of one of the basic situations: that of *English* servants in an *Irish* household. Now isn't that fundamental situation, and the absence of any reference to it throughout the book, intended to be purely *absurd?*

MR. GREEN

The British servants in Eire while England is at war is Raunce's conflict and one meant to be satirically funny. It is a crack at the absurd Southern Irish and at the same time a swipe at the British servants, who yet remain human beings. But it is meant to torpedo that woman and her daughter-in-law, the employers.

As to the rest, the whole of life now is of course absurd—hilarious sometimes, as I told you earlier, but basically absurd.

INTERVIEWER

And have you ever heard of an actual case of an Irish household being staffed with English servants?

MR. GREEN

Not that comes quickly to mind, no.

INTERVIEWER

Well, now what is it that you're writing on at present?

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MR. GREEN

I've been asked to do a book about London during the blitz, and I'm into that now.

INTERVIEWER

I believe you're considered an authority on that—and, having read *Caught*, I can understand that you would be. What's this book to be called?

MR. GREEN

London and Fire, 1940.

INTERVIEWER

And it is not fiction?

MR. GREEN

No, it's an historical account of that period.

INTERVIEWER

Then this will be your first full length work of non-fiction?

MR. GREEN

Yes, quite.

INTERVIEWER

I see. *London and Fire, 1940*—a commissioned historical work. Well, well; I dare say you'll have to give up the crabwise approach for this one. What's the first sentence?

MR. GREEN

"My 'London of 1940' . . . opens in Cork, 1938."

INTERVIEWER

. . . I see.

—TERRY SOUTHERN

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WHEN SENSES FLED

I am custodian of close things.
Even winter trees have blurred
To leaf, and faces come upon me
Suddenly. I am a startled man
To half the town, and half my yard
Is blunderland. First, I lost
The violets, then the grass,
And now, the red and wren white fence.
Farewell, the bright decay of oak,
The crewcut water, the black assizes
Of the night. Farewell, the visual.

Today, the wind began to lag
And all its freight of season drained
Into the neighbor trees. And all
The smoking, sideburned streets
Dropped ashes on the muted playground.
Let lightning slam the screen, I cry,
Let neighbors war, a shop of cats
Tear metal. O stone me with shouting.
But the grating thunderhead suspends
Its buzzing nest beneath my bough.
Farewell, the audible.

Touch,
Tell me what the world displays
For now I rain behind my eyes.
If you would hurt me, gather close,
For in the last deception, skin,
I must be broken by a kiss.
Love is a cave of scrolls, and I
Have thrown away all spectacles.
I roll horizons like a hoop
Among the mufflered trees, and see
Nerve ends crackling in the dark.
Farewell, the tangible.

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Inside,
I stand, a coalescent dust.
When I sing, my voices turn
To stone, and where I touch, veins
Stand out. When I am alone, the forest
Swarms with nakedness, and where
I point, pole stars waltz along
My finger. Look, the fence appears,
Then grass. And all my senses step
On naked feet into the garden,
To ring, an anvil of the storm,
To name the kneeling animals.

—JOHN WOODS

A LADY DYING

We watched her raise herself; her eyes, unseeing
The damask walls and delicate ornament,
As if she thought she heard a servant thieving,
Seemed shocked, indignant; her back was a little bent
Beneath the negligee, and still, as a wrestler
Is still with strain; her hands had come together,
Had strangely clasped and twined; it was a gesture—
Those closing hands—like lovers with each other.
They were upsetting all her years of pride.
She must have wondered at the negligence
That had not kept those clasping hands outside.
They were, she would have said, impertinent.

—DAVID PERKINS

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Self-portrait

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Jacques Villon

JACQUES VILLON was born near Rouen in 1875. His family was extraordinarily endowed with artistic talent: his grandfather and first teacher being a skilled engraver; one of his brothers becoming the sculptor Duchamp-Villon and another the painter, Marcel Duchamp. In 1895, Villon left Normandy for Montmartre. There he continued etching but his earnings for work in this medium and an occasional painting were a scarcely sufficient income. However, like Juan Gris and Forain, Villon was able to live by publishing drawings in the humorous and satirical magazines so popular around the turn of the century. Le Rire *published his first cartoon in 1897 (between covers by Toulouse-Lautrec) and a drawing by Villon, many of them very amusing, can be found in one or more of those magazines until 1910. In this early work the critic Jerome Mellquist has noted the same manner of capturing the essential of a subject which remained a characteristic of the Cubist painter who emerged after 1910. But the Cubist movement, preoccupied with method and formal structure, must have been welcomed by Villon as a clean break with the free and indulgent line of the followers of Lautrec. He could not have better signified this break than by helping to found a group of painters who, calling themselves the* Section d'Or, *adopted the principle that nature should be reconstructed according to an ideal canon of form.*

Fifty years ago, Villon moved to a quiet, faintly musty studio in the Paris suburb of Puteaux. He lives there today, occasionally eating at the restaurant of his friend, Camille Renault, where one can see a considerable collection of Villon's work.

Unlike so many of his contemporaries, Villon has never entirely renounced the principles and aims of Cubism. As he says of his method, "I begin from studies of nature. But from them I make emerge a construction, a play of arabesques and rhythms."

The drawings and etchings which follow are representative of the delicate prismatic quality of Villon's vision. The subject is never forced but seems to conform willingly to the demands of the artist's mind. Mellquist has referred to Villon as "incessantly the analyst", and another critic has compared him with Feininger, but to say as much is not to do justice to the unique gentleness and wit with which Villon composes his harmonies of line and shadow.

— N. W. A.

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Ooops! . . . I thought you were the maid.

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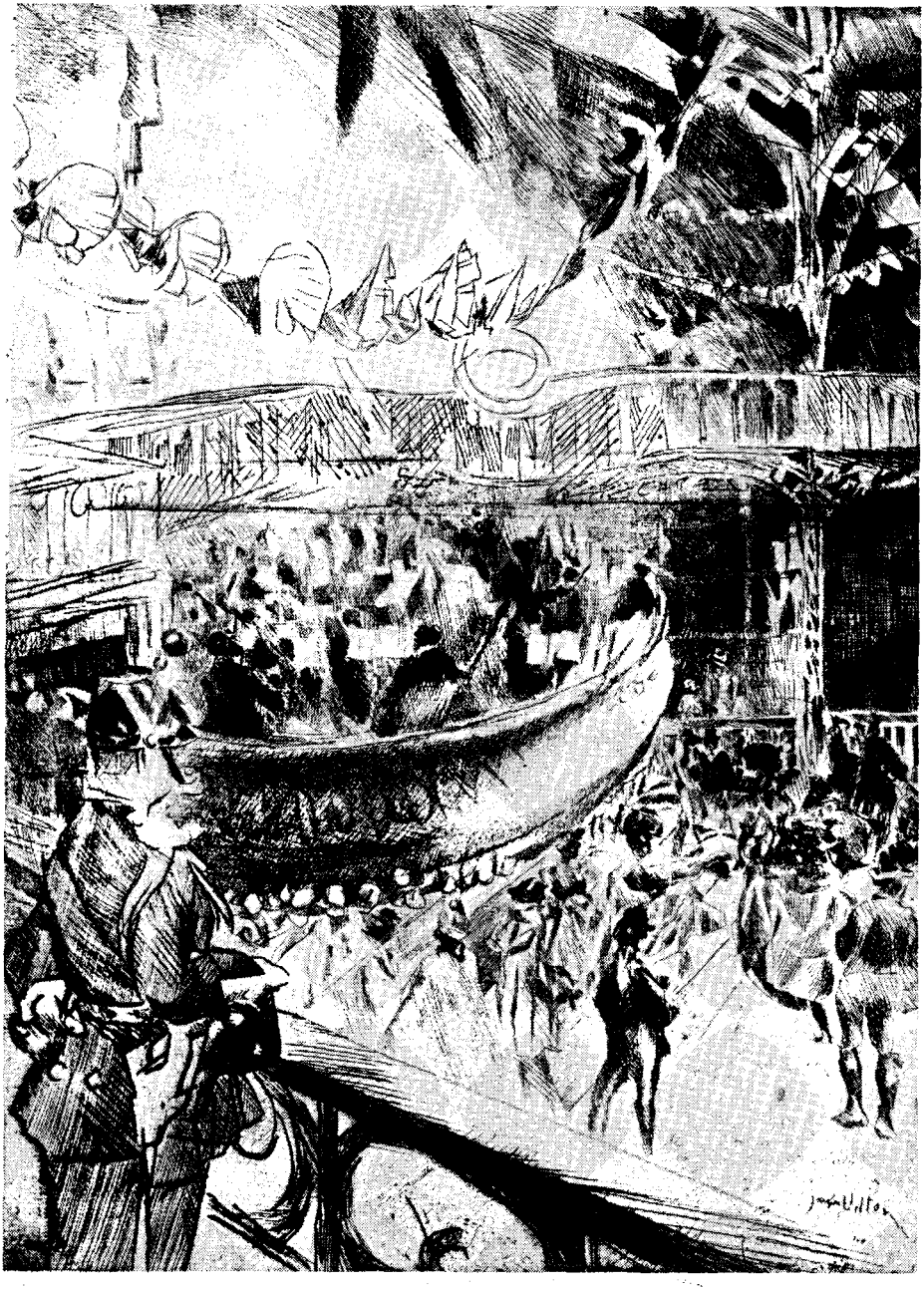

Le Bal du Moulin Rouge

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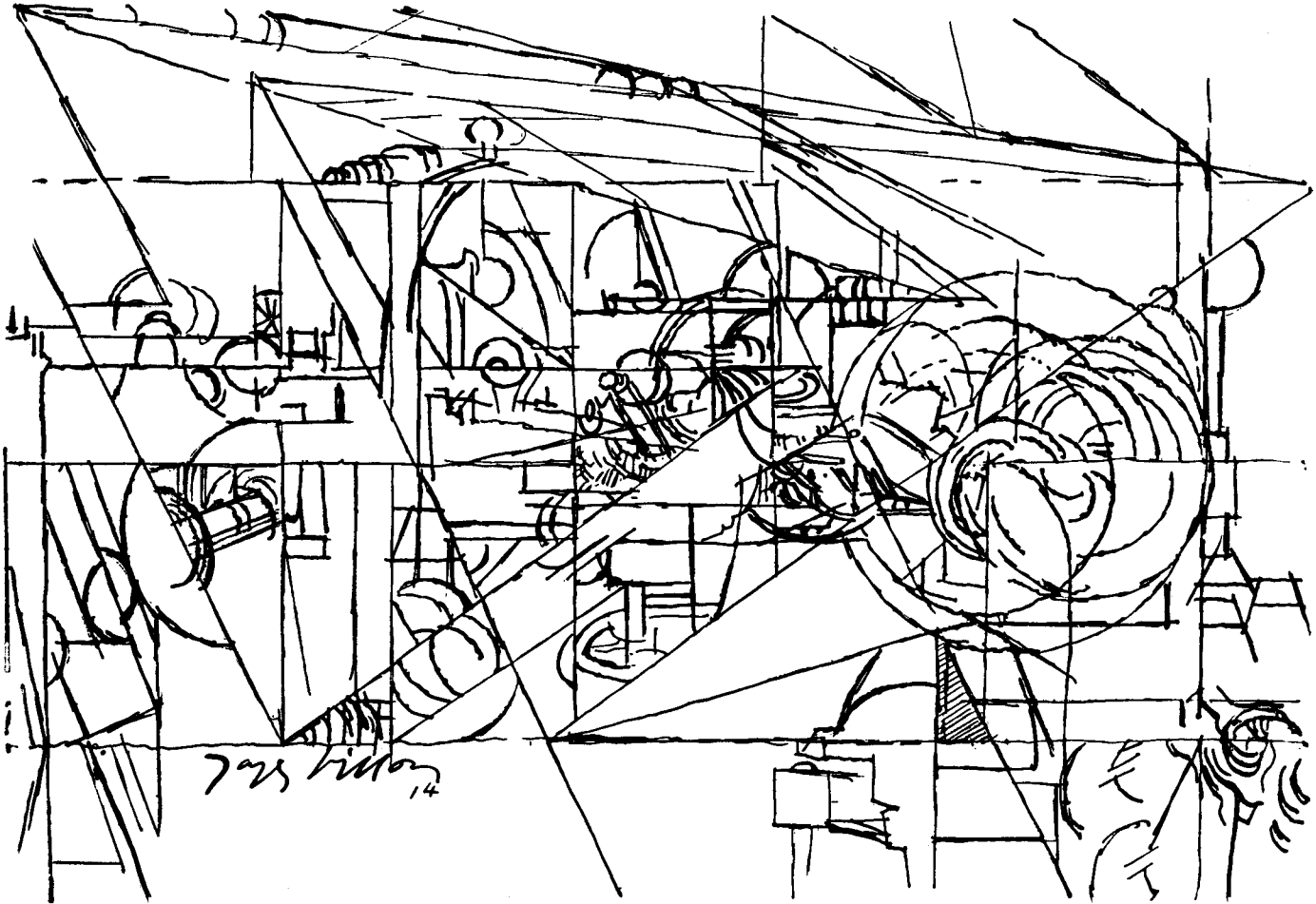

In the studio of a mechanic

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Still-life

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The little tight-rope walker

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The Fight

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A Monsieur Lyonard, Peintre du Roi

Nessuna cosa si può amare nè odiare, se prima no si cognition di quella. —LEONARDO DA VINCI

'Tis I Master, Francesco, come
to awaken you for noon refreshment.

See how he sleeps; as easily
in this Gaulish air, thick with Cypress dust

and auzels' jammerings, as once he lay
under a lighter sky atop that hill

in Val d'Arno that he knew so well.
How frequently I saw him walking there

watching the weaving birds, stooping
to scrutinize a leaf or flower,

and having come upon some realization
of their trick his eyes would brighten

with familiar excitation. How excellent
his knowledge was of those surroundings,

of each gully throbbing with spring rain,
each trilling gullet's nest,

each flower's season in the sun.
But when he sought to come to canvas

with this, brush the source
of these investigations into shapes

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that would reveal all that the mind revered
and understood, he would be irked

beyond the fringe of his dissatisfaction.
I think he almost gripped the cause

that mastered him, that would turn him
tensely from his begging easel.

Those countless paintings, carefully examined
and so carefully abandoned,

left for dust to settle on
because his mind declared them incomplete,

how could he guess their truth.
Once, before the artist in him had aroused

the hundred-eyed investigator
to assist him, he had known how

to put the captive brush to work; to see
the work before him like a bone bare of the flesh

which shelters it, to which it clings.
And he had known how to use

that sudden moment when the fire of the mind
leaps to activity, and feels

that purpose consummate consumed within it.
That moment just before the mind,

the learned, knowing mind betrays
its confidence. And then, the rage suppressed,

humility all humbled, the master had become
the servant's slave,

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But that was once. It is no longer so.
Perhaps because his age is great

the mind has freed the hand. Perhaps,
because each day the world, with its unity

he tried to heed and tell, ebbs,
like the sea from an emerging rock,

a little more away from him.
There is not more than the immediate now.

—OSWALD LEWINTER

ESPRIT DE CORPS

Be reticent and elegant,
Twist the opal on your hand,
Turn your pale eyes on me,
For I delight in irony.

Lady, conquer if you can
The constant light invading each
Fiber of your shining dress
And your amassed stubbornness.

Who knows the texture of the silk,
The lace beneath, and all below?
Who knew last night at sleep's expense
Your elegant lack of reticence?

—PERRY ORGAN

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THE WRACK

Love, we who ply forked tongues to speak
Note what critique
Kelp, cork, and shell
Have strewn on sand. Though not assembled well,
Its meaning is not oblique.

Look how the gull, who hearkens with eye
At once as sly
As ours, plots out
His prey from heights; and there can be no doubt
The whole wrack steels to his cry.

I, planning to string you token beads,
Fidget nine creeds,
For not one avail;
And, touting nine shells, am roiled to learn a snail
From one bright house recedes.

Love, I do not hold we should not speak,
Though all things leak
By nature. I mean
That words be known as tiderace. When stoic green
Appears, lower the beak.

Sun splays. O all kelp and cork pale
Into flat detail
As we plunge in the sea!
Swim, Love. But heed, in this long day's clarity,
The gentlest sands may flail.

—DAVID GALLER

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To Be And Not To Be

IN 1952 a rich and lively magazine given to moral teachings and the wonders of science published a "factual study" of the hangover, sub-titling it in block letters A SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS, and sub-sub-titling it (for the immediate relief of drunks and advertisers): "The damage is not real; headache may be due to liver and shakes to remorse; a cure would be worth a fortune."

With many quotes from reputable doctors who have been doing "alcoholic research" for years, the article stressed the following points:

1. The hangover is a major social and industrial plague, the hidden costs of which "dwarf the ones that show on paper," and it is growing yearly, unchecked, to gigantic proportions.

2. The hangover is *not* a major ill. It is a *disturbance* (italics theirs), never resulting in an injury, "never accompanied by any structural damage, organic change or tissue alteration."

3. Alcohol itself is perfectly harmless. It cannot be blamed for anything: not for cyrrhosis of the liver, not for delirium tremens, not even for death. What kills you is malnutrition. Drinkers forget to eat. If they ate more, they could drink more. In fact, obesity kills more people than alcohol. People should eat much less.

4. Perhaps allergy causes all the damage. Some drinkers cannot stand the smell of certain liquors.

5. Or perhaps is it talking and laughing and smoking? "The drinker uses up his recources uneconomically. His decreased control leads him to squander his store of energy in unchannelled, unbridled meaningless activities," instead of concentrating *only* on drinking.

6. The great problem is not how to *prevent* the hangover, but how to *cure* it, so that people may drink more. That is the scientific question which "has preoccupied the lay drinker, to say nothing of the pharmacologist." Whoever discovers such a cure

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Notes on Drunkenness

by Niccolo Tucci

will become the richest man on earth. But, alas, "So far there has been no honest hint of his appearance."

7. As a conclusion: "Abstinence is not the answer." In fact, whiskey has been called "The Milk of Old Age."

8. Add to this that alcohol is a "weapon against fears and frustrations."

9. Therefore, Addicts, drink as much as you please, but *remember* always to use your minds! The cure can only come "in the form of intelligence."

My first reaction, I remember, was one of profound moral indignation. How could those doctors allow themselves to be quoted in support of such nonsense? I asked. This was the same as saying to a group of known sadists: "Physical punishment is good, so go out and spank children, but remember to be moderate!" And the part about alcohol and malnutrition? Water, too, does not drown you—lack of oxygen in your lungs is what actually kills. But would anyone feel tempted to jump into the water after hearing such a thing?

All my friends laughed at me. In their opinion it was I who still had a hangover from the days when words meant what they said and all science began with correct terminology.

To a large extent this article was promotion for the magazine. Don't we all want to pass for intellectuals? So, every now and then an illustrated magazine will make a serious study on how to explode a bomb in your cupboard without breaking a single glass. Every problem is tickled, none is tackled: to be *and* not to be, that is the question. Against that one, outmoded doubt, we offer you:

TWO BRAND NEW CERTAINTIES FOR THE SAME PRICE!

VICE IS VIRTUE AND VIRTUE IS VICE!

Knowing these facts, why should I pick up this old magazine after it was forgotten for six years and restore it to polemical honors?

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Two reasons: it was written by drunks and read by drunks. The drunks who wrote it were of a type I shall describe in the following notes. The drunks who read it were two friends of mine who had been completely cured but who were even greater addicts to popularized science than to alcohol. They read it and they made it their Bible. One of them is now in a clinic suffering from an excess of laughter and meaningless activities, the other died six months ago from an allergy to the perfume of whiskey.

Their wives, poor wretches, are still trying to sue the magazine, but no lawyer will listen to them. What follows are excerpts from letters I had written to my friends in the course of these years and never sent, because my friends, poor fellows, during their short recovery, left without alcohol, were the most frightful bores:

Is boredom not a crime? I ask. When it becomes official, don't we have the Marxist State? Years ago Dr. Leonard Carmichael of Tufts College, a most eminent scientist who is now working for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, made the discovery that boredom was a cause of fatigue, seriously hampering the efficiency of employees and workers, more so perhaps than even the hangover. His findings were described in a most boring article in that cheerless *New York Times* we all love and respect. I wrote to him that I had made the same discovery at the age of two, but had never publicized it because I had assumed that it could not be otherwise. He instead had to go through the boring ordeal of all sorts of experiments with yawning Guinea pigs exposed to public speeches, before he could confirm that I was right. In my letter I sympathized with him for the waste of his time and his efforts.

Would anyone believe it? He answered me most kindly and said that he had been amused by my "totally unorthodox approach." I have never felt prouder in my life. To think that I could have amused the discoverer of boredom!

But only as recently as a month ago, in that same *New York Times*, I read that another great scientist from Vienna had come to the conclusion that people took to alcohol because they suffered from what he proposed to call the "Executive Complex."

That I had also known. The problem is no longer how much alcohol, but how much soberness we are able to stand. Let business or politics run dry for a few days, then see who is the loser! VIPS floored by heart attacks after hearing the truth about themselves, children strangled by the roadside, mothers charred in their beds, business meetings and top-level political meetings, summit or

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stratospheric talks broken up by profanity, if attended at all, copies of Dale Carnegie's manuals pinned on bathroom walls with kitchen knives, skyscraper elevators crowded beyond capacity on their way up, then honest citizens coming down from all sides of the building like dead cats from a volcano. Easy with moderation! Easy!

It is silly to say: "Don't drink, the world is beautiful, life is worth living." The world is horrible and life is not worth living. The world might still be beautiful were it not overbuilt with real-estate developments and overrun with cars and with people who inhabit and drive either, both or neither. And life would be worth living, were it not for the "living" to the making of which all life is sacrificed. When you get yourself drunk with such ambitions as to make ends meet or pay your taxes (very negative ambitions), you might as well get yourself drunk with alcohol, kerosene or nail-polish. We land on the deserted shores of an empty afternoon at 5 or 6, with no idleness left to enjoy life.*

So we must stand for Freedom of Illusion. Pass the bottle!

ONE may be drunk with love, hate, jealousy, the sight of blood, any of the eternal, basic passions. Except that these are ancient forms of drunkenness. Like certain types of syphilis, they have almost disappeared. They are still to be found in remote villages and are very much sought by the movie producers because they are unknown in "higher cultures" and therefore not offensive to their higher taboos. Hate, for example, so displeasing to the Almighty, so sure to arouse His Wrath, is now divorced from wars. Death is distributed according to the winds (holes in the clouds mark the recipients of exemplary punishment), or according to strange notions of "ideological deviationism," whatever these mysterious words may mean.

The paratrooper, for example, hates no one in particular, so he decides to hate all those who are not in the habit of descending onto the world in a nylon umbrella. He is drunk on his air and his umbrella; he is, in fact, an angel to himself, and man down there in his buses and offices, a worm. Which man down there certainly is. Except that most of these poor devils have one dream in their lives: to be able to come down from the sky in a nylon umbrella. Not to punish or kill, God forbid. Just because it is pleasant, and they would want every worm in the earth to share their

* *Idleness is not easily acquired. See Bertrand Russell's Primer for Apprentice Relaxers called* In Praise of Idleness.

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beautiful experience. Why not love everyone as a potential parachutist and consider him a friend? But no: we need a substitute for hate.

Worse than hate, Love, the main theme of the Gospels, is outmoded and dangerous. When you see what most people let their employers and their wives, or their superiors in the Party do to them "in their best interest," (and they actually accept it as if it were in their best interest!) you feel like saying: "Don't ever love thy neighbor as thyself! Hate him! Do anything *but* offer him a replica of your self-love!"

Alcohol, hashish, heroin, any of the lethal drugs should be given a place in our society and used *officially* by governments as a most moral, harmless, humane means to free the country from those dangerous drunks who *never* drink or those maniacs who *never* take dope. It is my firm belief that only very few of the world's alcoholics must be cured. If anything, more drinkers should be dragged to the bottle than from it.

In most cases it is a real blessing that the poor wretches be made harmless by poison before they can poison others with their wisdom. Beware of the dry drinker! The reformed alcoholic remains an alcoholic, as the melted obese man remains a thin fat man. The addiction to alcohol, like the constant mis-taking of one sex for another, is a symptom of a deeper disorder. Only a few of the drunks take to the bottle. Others are founders of political parties that don't know what they want but want it right away, so that they may rejoice in the success of their endeavours. And still others are militant workers in political parties that *do* know what they want, but do *not* want it right away. These work for post-posterity. Three generations hence is their bare minimum. Thus the sins of the great-grandfathers shall be unjustly visited upon their great-grandsons.

But both these types are drunk with the same form of altruistic self-centeredness, or the mania to cure others of one's own mental illness, whether or not they need it or they asked for it.

WE are still drunk with the Wonders of Science, and yet Science today works almost exclusively to repair its own damages.

The Forbidden Fruit of Knowledge has become a reality, compared to which the great Defiance of Prometheus was the theft of a matchbox. We *have* stolen the sun from the sky, we *have* lit it on earth, and now we don't know where to hide it. There is no room for it under the table. We can neither *not* touch it *nor* touch it. So now give me that bottle and let me tell you a fairy tale of how

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Man subdued Nature, made the world safe from lions and cannibals, then left without leaving a forwarding address. You can now find him on the moon.

Drunkest of all are those magazine editors who want "factual" or "realistic" articles, that is: as limited in scope as the minds of the fact-producing specialists. (Contrary to the general belief, this is not an American attitude. It was one. It is now a "European discovery.")

"Stick to your subject!" says the magazine editor.

"But my subject *is* general," says the poor writer. "If the specialist has no means and no will to go beyond his very narrow field of competence and is as proud of his universal ignorance as he is of his microscopic knowledge, why should we, who are free agents and whose special job it is to think in universal terms, be chased by *you* into *his* ivory tower?"

Nothing doing. The hangover of "factualness" is hard to erase. Then the Magazine Editor under the cloak of "science" goes in for moralizing, and we have seen the effects. The hangover kills off more than half of your country's office-power and man-power every day? Let's get rid of the symptom!

The burglar alarm is *not* the thief, but it is a great nuisance, so let us silence it, that we may spend our nights in peace.

ANYTHING in excess is drunkenness, you say. But in excess of what? Poundage or miles or megatons? Ah, my dear friend, to know that you would have to ask the Greeks. We who can measure anything, from galaxies to anti-matter, have lost Measure itself, which alone can give meaning to these games. "Nothing in Excess" and "Know Thyself"! These were the only two inscriptions to be found on the temple of Apollo in Delphi, which was the temple of Truth. The very things that are denied our age: Temperance and Self-knowledge.

Of course drunkenness can be noble, equalled in this only by soberness. If Apollo was sober, the Pythian priestess drank, and the mystic exhaltation of drunkenness was essential to her function. The serene stare of reason and the staggering flashes of unreason were the two guiding lights of the whole Greek civilization. But the Greeks were quite shocked by the Thracians, whose wineglasses were too big, and whose ways, when they drank, were exactly as bad as yours, my friend. Few drunks were ever nobler than their wine. Li-Tai-Po the Chinese poet, who was constantly drunk, died

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of an excess of water when, having had too much wine, he tried to drink the moon from his small row-boat. Of course drinking to befog the horizon is also a noble thing. Against an intemperate world which batters man as a storm batters a lone ship, he pours his divine oil on the drunk waves, and the sea will be tamed for a while. But, if drinking is an art, it is the art of putting down the glass, as painting is the art of not painting and writing of not writing. But are *you* such an artist, my friend?

TEMPERANCE is of course a good thing, but it must not be intemperate. Some of the people who preach temperance are so intemperate in their demands, so drunk with self-righteousness, so unamusing and, above all, so ugly, that the worst state of drunkenness is preferable to their approval and their company. And, incidentally, if the members of the American Christian Temperance Union became suddenly drunk, all of the Bowery would be up in arms. Those inveterate drinkers have respect for their vice. They might even stop drinking as a form of protest. Rightly so, because these temperance people are the seed of dictatorship (which means the essence of all weakness). "The whole world shall abstain, so that I will not be tempted." They would transform the world into a hospital. They would abolish drinking, gambling and love-making, all the good things of life, because they themselves are uncivilized and their thoughts are obscene.

This makes me think of a man who was himself a reformed alcoholic and most careful never to touch a drop of alcohol in any form (he spat a candy if there was rum in it). I once invited him to have lunch at an "Alkoholfreies Restaurant" in Switzerland. He was out of his wits.

"But do you realize that I don't drink?" he shouted at me, drunk with rage.

"Yes," I said, very soberly. "This is a place where you don't drink."

"Oh no!" he said. "This is a place where *they* don't drink! Look at their faces, please!"

I looked. It took me a fraction of a second. "Damn right you are!" I said. But he went on: "Abstinence means the practice to abstain from something good. If I abstain from eating excrements, I will have abstained from nothing. I happen not to like them."

We went to a place where everybody was drunk on Neuchatel, and it was *he* who did not drink.

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THE alcoholic is two things: first of all he is a man who does not want others to know that he has enough strength to unwant his doom. Secondly, a man who gets more drunk on water than on wine, and who himself takes alcohol because he cannot get others drunk on his water. A very complicated physiology, but Science will be Science!

The worst news one may give an alcoholic is that he has will-power and deserves our respect.

The existence of will-power is in itself an embarrassing factor in our lives, no matter what our vice. It upsets all the delicate balance of our self-clearing calculations, it discredits our passions, shows the inanity of our dramas, and leaves nothing in their place but a feeling of shame over the fact that we may well not die so stupidly and so soon, whether from alcohol, reckless driving, or compulsive money-making.

But who wants to be torn from the vortex of suicide? What can be dearer to us than our death? Our life perhaps, but then, what is our life? At best, a well-ordered disposal of energies in view of coming death so that, when death finally comes, most of the dying will be finished, and hardly a thing can be torn from our hands.

"The true philosopher" says Socrates, "is always occupied in the practice of dying" ..."He has had the desire of death all his life long." Thus the drunk or the man who kills himself with overwork are no exception to the rule, rather *they* are the rule and the student of death an exception.

Degrees are rarely given in that school, so it is only natural that when the finals come and we are unprepared, having had all the time and all the teachers and the books and the warnings, we should feel persecuted by a most cruel fate rather than victims of our own stupidity. And it is quite a drama, indeed this is the essence of tragedy and may be formulated thus: *All escape from the notion of death makes us meet death more unexpectedly and more stupidly.*

NOW, some people won't admit this formulation. And whether at this point there is a chemical component in their blood that attracts them to the bottle, I don't know and do not care to discover. The fact is that they are cowards. And their death-song (which may go on for thirty years: some drunks are tough) goes more or less like this: "I, who was born a god, with the whole world within reach of my hands, lie now defeated in the gutter.

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Come and listen, (whoever happens to be present, usually a barman), hear what the world has done to me!"

It is always and only "the world." Bottled up in his personal problems, with his vintage well-marked across his face, he believes that no person on earth has had a harder time and been more patient. Writers don't have to be writers and poets to be poets. All they have to do is take down what he says. "I am going to make your fortune right this minute. Remember what I say: I am going to tell you what happened to this person right here, myself *in person*, understand? My SELF! And don't laugh when I say so. Even if I am drunk, you better listen to my story, because no one in the whole world has suffered what I suffered."

Thus, with the thickest tongue, he spills the thinnest tale. He may not even spill it; he may keep it to himself and brood over it for days on end: it remains a poor story all the same. In fact, even when there is tragedy in his life, it will sound false in his retelling. He knows it. Tears keep coming up, he has more tears than liquor on his heart, and they dilute his alcohol with which he tries to give them body and flavor. Not all the perfumes of Arabia, we might say, or not all the bouquets of France, will make us drink his tears. He stays his only customer.

That is his tragedy. A man hard hit by Fate may stagger like a drunk, because he cannot take so much all in one stroke. But when real alcohol was mixed with Fate, then our pity diminishes, or it augments, on the low level of disgust. Tragic pity is immensely dignified; alcoholic pity is not, no matter how you dress it up. There was a man I knew who had lost his only son at the hands of the Germans, and it was tragic when he retold his story. Only for those, however, who accepted on sight the workings of a moral equation between losses: Loss of his only son – loss of his dignity. Not for those who had heard him before trying to sell one lie after another, until that day he graduated to a good, solid loss. It was a great relief for him to have a true story to peddle. He had received a medal, he was vicariously a monument. And he knew very well when to pull out the corpse for another free drink.

This is another point to make: alcoholics are dishonest twice: when they don't drink and when they drink. When they don't drink because they tell the doctor that they could not digest their food without a little glass of something. The opposite is true and they know it: that little glass is what stops their digestion altogether and helps them on their way to cyrrhosis ."The doctor said

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one drink will help me if I am used to it." But there is something else they know that they will never mention: that after that one drink, even if they are far from drunk, they are not the same person. Whatever they may tell themselves is as good as if told in Chinese.

Now at this point a friend might say: "Don't you think it unwise to diminish your powers of resistance? Don't you know that the only rule set and followed by all the strongest men on earth is to flee rather than meet the challenge? Socrates said so, Buddha said so, the Lord's prayer says clearly: "Do not lead us into temptation." Are you stronger than these men?

He is. "Very thoughtful of you" is his answer, "but I am not a child. I am a man..." (in the case of a woman it will be: "I am a grown person." She may even reveal her age). "I can go without alcohol for months. I always know when to stop."

They never do. Their bodies know it for them, so the limit is set not by them but against them. Their famous will power never comes into play. But hear them boast and hear their wives confirm that "Ed is a special case. He can stop in the middle of a drink and stay sober for months. Then of course he resumes it, but he must not be treated like a child. Oh no! Not *he*!"

These women are accomplices in suicide. Now, when the alcoholic drinks, he never stops being dishonest. "In Vino Veritas" is an old saying that has nothing to do with the drinker's own truth. He has no secrets: that is true, or rather his friends have no secrets, once they have taken him into their confidence; but it is never true that his truth may be found under the skin of his moral reserve or of his sober lies, so that the moment he begins to cross his eyes and pour out his heart, any one may come in and get his fill of truth. Oh no. If extracting the truth from our souls were such an easy thing, then the psychiatrists would have nothing to do but serve Martinis, put a stool in the place of the couch, and learn what a bad world has done to that wonderful martyr sitting in front of them.

What happens is exactly the opposite: the roots of our hypocrisy go to the very core of things; they are the gift of the devil, tied with the umbilical chord and never opened. And what comes out under the influence of alcohol is still the same old fog that we hear every day in offices or homes—only a bit more prolix but rarely more amusing.

When the drinker confesses, he makes a careful choice of his pet sins, and those are non-existent. He may be unable to distinguish a person from a chair, but never an unprofitable lie from a profitable one. How could he see himself objectively as a very insignificant

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entity in a huge world of "others", when he sees nothing but himself spread over the whole universe? "I am alone!" is indeed a true cry, but it should not be taken literally. He will feel infinitely worse if others try to keep him company in that solitude. Their interest in his case can only fix and amplify his solipsistic malady. In Vino Veritas my foot!

"I let him do it" says his wife, "because it helps him get it out of his system."

No no. He has *nothing* in his system, and it gets nothinger by drinking. "The Void Fills": here is a proverb I propose as a substitute for In Vino Veritas.

THOSE who claim that they are not real alcoholics because they only drink in company, are perhaps worse than a confessed lone drinker. Who drinks in company today? Cocktail parties are no company. They differ from the subway car only in that the motion is internal: there are no straps to hang on, and one pretends to know the people who are there with you; and your preoccupation is with the glass in your hand that the elbows of "company" might upset any minute, or with leaving the company of those who think they can talk with you. Company indeed! Like saying: "I don't live alone because I live with 8 million people in New York."

People and company don't mix in our time. Like idleness, and like drinking itself, company is a great art that was lost long ago. Drunkenness with success, (a substitute for company) drunkenness with publicity (another substitute for company, showing the mental impotence of our society) have transformed social gatherings, especially in the field of letters, into harrowing experiences where drunkenness alone can throw a mask on the face of despair. Alcohol has infected conversation even where people do not drink. There is an alcoholic style that makes people begin to discuss arguments, then forget them half-way, or go off on a tangent, more so than they ever did before. (Montaigne has exactly this to say about the fate of conversation in his day! That at least is consoling. But today's "conversation" is *scientifically* bad, it is specialized boredom and newsy imbecillity.) Oh no. The lone drinker is better. He at least speaks alone.

THE error of most cures: they re-adjust the drunk to a world that the doctor himself would not dare to discuss, let alone criticize. He forgets that the patient's refusal to live soberly is the last sign of health, as vomit, when we eat rotten foods.

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MORE temperance in advertising? Surely. But *not* the advertising of liquor. That should be made more violent, more joyous. Let the wine dealer stay in his shop and praise his wine, and the preacher stay in his church and praise the Lord. This recent trend of preaching abstinence on the part of distillers is not going to impress anybody and they know it. But it might set a dangerous example to the dry drunks mentioned before, who wish to cure you of your good health! The world is not a hospital, thank God! And temptations are *excellent*, and yielding to them *wonderful*!

The only industry that should go out of business is the Miracle Industry, namely those sections of the press, radio, television and advertising businesses that cannot live without promising miracle cures for everything, from corns to cancer. What they do is really criminal: they attack that poor mouse of our will-power, and that still poorer mouse of our dignity, by telling us we are exempt from any moral obligation to ourselves, because Science, that prostitute, will take care of our troubles.

HE who is not himself a drunk can speak for years about the complex mental make-up of our race without saying a thing worth repeating. Only a man who has been sick can auscultate a sick man, hear his troubles and tell how ill he is. He alone knows how little one wants to recover and how little it matters that one may be cured of the minor disturbance when through its sleepless fever one has seen how diseased the future is.

Yes. The Greeks had a future and they never spoke about it. And we, unfortunately, are *not* included in it. We got off on a tangent long ago. They *had* it and they put it into everything they did and in their works it may still be found, still fresh and good and in great quantity for our own future generations. No fear of it disappearing like oil. We *have* no future and speak about it all the time.

The whole structure of our science is that of a gigantic Corporation for the Improvement of the Past. 1945 was so much better than today: it was molecular. People think they can live in the present. But there is no such thing. The present is the last of our cares. Today has *always* come after tomorrow. For if today *has not already been* a good tomorrow, seen from a distance, coveted and known for a long time, it is nothing but the continuation of last night's drunken party, with the lights on, the ashtrays full, the glasses sticky, and the sun never rising.

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A WALK IN THE VOID

I could not see the life I live.
Wheeling to catch it as it was,
I found myself the fugitive;
There were my footprints, in reverse.
I could not praise them, could not curse.
Bare of their principle and cause,

They lay caught fast within that realm
No inquiry can justify,
No good or evil overwhelm.
To enter was to be interred
Where the gross lip absorbs the word.
It was what dead men occupy.

Or so it seemed. And yet I live.
Living I left my tracings there.
Driven historian, I arrive
Here where I blindly went, and see.
Dark walker through dubiety!—
Resuming you I grow aware.

Which is my life. O formless ground
Of quick experience, but not
Experience itself, I found
That I had walked upon thy void
Saved by the blindness I employed,
Till I stood blinking in my thought.

—ALAN STEPHENS

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MATERIA POETICA

Psychoanalysis

Pursued by a tiger in his sleep
he turned himself into a horse turd
and woke to find
he'd been eaten by sparrows.

Success

Advice to a poet who would win prizes:
Step craftily around this ruin
and that rickety tower
lest you topple their gods.

Quiz Program

For a billion dollars in cash
and a hatful of Purple Hearts
What is the moral equivalent
of a bayonet in the belly?

Prescription

Said the old doctor to the young doctor:
There are three roads to success.
Per os, per rectum, and per vagina.
Choose your orifice.

Funeral of a Poet

Said the chief mourner to the gravedigger:
We don't suspect any foul play.
If he was murdered,
he was murdered by friends.

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Artist's Choice

Giotto drew a perfect circle,
freehand, with a brush.
When he finished he had two choices,
to sell it as a toilet seat,
or save it for a halo.

Iconoclast

When the idol-maker lost faith in his gods
he put time-bombs in their bellies.
With the legacies from the pious dead
the priests built a new temple.

Critic

When they came to take him away
he was measuring with a piece of string
the distance between the picture on the wall
and the picture in the mirror.

Prophecy

When the knife was at his throat
the ram spoke to Abraham and Isaac:
Save a horn for Moses. He will need it
to proclaim liberty throughout the land
on the day of atonement.

Trial Balance

Fra Luca Pacioli one day
met a young virgin in tears.
Balancing compassion against penance,
he invented double entry bookkeeping.

Divine Justice

When an ugly woman
is tried for adultery
God himself
grants a change of venue.

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Theory of Value

Said the banker to the cannibal:
You will come to no good end.
The wise man does not devour his capital;
he makes it work for him.

Reasons of the Heart

I do not wish to press the charges,
the girl said to the magistrate.
In Paradise the pear tree
still weeps for Augustine.

—LAWRENCE LIPTON

LA VIE LITTÉRAIRE EN PROVINCE

If maybe we could form a little group
Say something like Bloomsbury and we all
Could write biographies of each other
What I mean is we could have a movement
And all write in gourd-shaped stanzas
Sergei knows a brewer's son who paints
And he thinks might pay for publishing
He did a picture called The Conscious Wound
We'll get together and work out a Myth
If maybe we could form a little group
We might find a way around this bore
Of blushing unseen in the desert air.

—RICHARD BARNES

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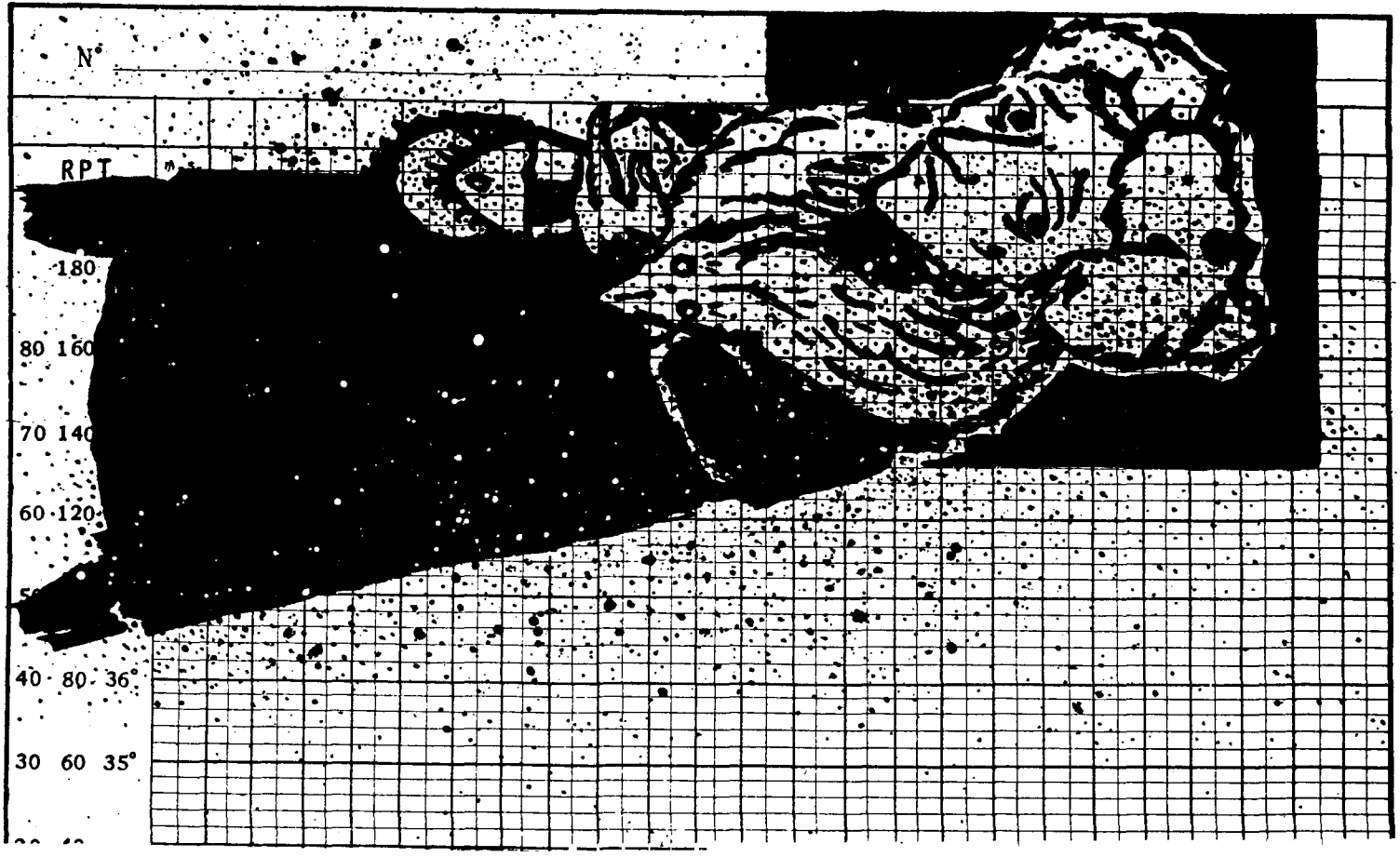

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EVELYN SHEFNER

THE FOURTH-FLOOR APARTMENT

ALMOST every morning lately the beginning of light, rainy day or fair, would fall upon the eyelids flatly, tiredly, and the arms and legs like blocks of stone and the ache deep in the bones for the secret of comfort buried inside the unsolicitous mattress, and she would know: I have had the dreams again. And really, there was no morning lately when she could say for a fact that the greater part of the hours of rest had not been squandered on those terrifying feats of acrobatics or on some round of energetic, shockingly inappropriate chores. There were entire nights chained to the mattress that crushed the spine like sheetmetal, each muscle tied into its separate hard knot, the soul (poor thing) flying far and away, consigned to its own devilish adventures. Where would it end? How long could it go on? I am losing, she thought, I have lost so much already: how much more will I be able to spare?

There were nights lost in climbing, slipping back, clambering out of bottomless pits; fools' errands down the mazes of winding country roads, a burning letter she plucked from an RFD box that shriveled and charred her fingers, the flames fanning out to demolish a topless old Willys sedan with three dead babies stacked neatly on the wide front seat. But the worst was this: that even though safety catches had been installed on all the windows of her fourth-floor apartment and the door reinforced with a solid steel plate, she could never, night after night, rid herself of the notion that someone was about to break in.

Like as not, the summons would come when the night was half gone, with a sinister creak of a window being pried, or

— Drawing by Mario Avati

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a sustained, intimate rapping on the steel-barred door. What good then to call, Who is there, Who are you? As if he or they waiting out there would give back a name! Only, if she were able to slap and shake herself fully awake, she would get up stealthily and in her bare feet go about and turn on all the lights; sometimes first exploring the three rooms with a flashlight; looking into the closets, pushing aside the heavy bags reeking of mothballs where she still kept the old clothes that were not quite good enough for the city—until she was persuaded that no intruder had forced his entrance while she slept and hidden himself with the shabby cast-offs she could not bear to throw out.

Once the lights were on and warmed to life the furniture and books and prints of paintings she had bought since coming to the city, the sense of crisis would ebb, and after reading for an hour or two she might feel calmed enough to return, for as much of the night as was left, to sleep. But night after night of these urgencies had drained her. Getting into her clothes in the morning she felt like an old woman. The benefits of no day would blot out such midnight ordeals.

"See here," Mr. Emerson said, "you may say what you like, something precious and perishable has gone out of this world, and it will be a long time, mark my words, before it returns. Look at the young men and women in this library, swimming in shoals to the university to catch a husband or guarantee themselves a good living—doctors or accountants, psychologists—what stamp will their education leave on them? What will they hand on to their children? Inferior. Inferior."

In the blond watery sunlight that wavered through leaded panes to touch up the sober dark-barred room, the bound volumes on the shelves—her own desk at the window where behind her the gray spires and tenements of the city rose like a flight of steps—in this quiet place his words jangled off-key, tiresome old bells. Another time she might listen with more patience to an old man, but this morning her head ached and

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insufferable lethargy swelled out her body. Lifting a hand or walking up the library steps was like maneuvering a cluster of enormously inflated balloons. He must go away soon, she thought, he must go back to his own desk two floors below, or I shall not answer for the consequences—

"And one thing further!" Mr. Emerson cried, leaning a blue serge elbow on her desk, his gray head thrust in her direction like the point of a spear: "There is one thing I may tell you in confidence, Miss Ellis. And there are not too many people in New York one may say this to, today. Look at the faces of your students here. Listen to their names. *The mixture has become adulterated!* There was a time when these people would keep to their sweatshops and their own way of life. Let them keep to their own. It is the only way to avoid spreading the disease, incurably. I say this because after all you have not been here so very long, and I thought it my plain duty."

Warmth, movement, seeped back with the slipping away of the morning. Students trooped in after the early classes, made their selections, settled placidly at the monkish long oak tables to chew the cud of their discoveries. The icy bar that had been pressed on her limbs was gone. Only, only, in the smoky sunlight outside her window the city soared like the terraces of a stone forest, alien, impenetrable; and the kindergarten of solemn infants scanning, scribbling, opening and shutting books before her were citizens of another territory—the distinct race of the very young.

Before coming to New York she had not known there were so many dark people in the world. During the first few months the impression was always with her of a voluptuous darkness, an atmosphere, breathing and suggestive, that rose from the dark holes of the subways and called like spice winds through the narrow streets. In the steamy tropical summer the girls had worn flowers in their hair and smocked blouses cut down to the last decencies of their tanned bosoms. Through the spaces of openwork sandals their toenails protruded a blatant red, and their full, blousy skirts swished as though they walked across the pavements to the music

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of low pipes and drums. She had not known which were Jew, which Italian: for all she knew, the city had been taken over by bands of gypsies. Family parties with golden faces chatted in the subways in the Spanish of parakeets and cockatoos.

In this redolent garden of humanity she walked, as she had moved at home, dowdy, forlorn, more or less alone: a woman past her prime. —Let Mr. Emerson say what he pleases, I have been here three years already! Perhaps it was the touch of the country, that spot of cleanliness that could never be scrubbed quite clean, which gave her case away. Make-up stood out garishly on her pallid cheeks like tattooing; her off-brown hair was the shade most accurately and offensively described as mousey. What she could do for herself, she had done. For the rest, she could expect no more than was coming to her. Life, as her mother had been fond of saying, evened itself out.

Still, this afternoon: the library, the late afternoon sun smearing through the windows and staining her hand, where its reflection shuddered, a dull brick-pink; the fatigue that was never very far from her nowadays, like a heavily mailed hand pressing flat the top of her head...

She had tried, she had really tried. She had gone to concerts, she had read books, she had attended meetings. She had tried to become interested in the students. There was a Miss Rubenstein in Files on the floor below; she had gone to university lectures with her, had dinner, met her friends. But eventually from these new alliances too she backed off and faded away like an old photograph in a farmhouse album; just as she had faded away to begin with from the life and her associates back home. It had taken more strength than anyone knew to save up the money to go to library school and make a new beginning. If her mother had not died at last and left her the house to sell, she might never have begun at all.

"*Rock of Ages, cleft for me...*"

The jangle of carrillons from the university chapel reverberated, notes of brass and notes of iron, through the room—out of which long ago all daylight and activity had retreated,

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only the desk lamps echoing evenly at their stations the rhythm of a line of streetlights outside. For a moment (she hadn't even seen the last student leave), she was possessed by a spasm of fearful unreality; her eyes wandering from the white, wasted, delicate hands to the desk-top where they lay gripping a yellow pencil, up again to the venetian blinds sagging at indecent angles, still to be lowered for the night.

With a small, wanton *pop!* the pencil came apart between her fingers. The noise was damaging, and conclusive. One half rose out of her hands like a yellow bird, teetered a moment, then plummeted under her desk. As she bent down to look, darkness swarmed before her eyes and thickened. Raising her head, she felt her throat vibrate with nausea; her hands that held on to the desk for support were damp and unclean. She should have gone home earlier, she had not realized how very bad this day was.

And tonight? If she were to die tonight, in her bed, who would know the difference?

She dropped both halves of the mangled pencil into the wastebasket, pushed back her chair and stood up to leave; stood looking around the room wildly a moment, then as quickly sat down again. After a few days, she told herself, holding tight and sparing no detail, the other tenants would begin complaining to Mrs. O'Neill. Then the police would arrive to batter down the door. They would cut their way through the steel plate with a torch. Mrs. O'Neill had been frightfully disturbed about the reinforced door—but Mrs. O'Neill was disturbed by so many things.

Callers at late hours upset her, or any callers: insurance agents, repairmen, delivery boys were often challenged on their way upstairs and put to rout. New furniture bought by the tenants aroused her foulest suspicions, large bags of garbage thrown away, unusual increases in mail received. Empty liquor bottles had to be discarded in other people's trash cans. If you went away for a week-end or on a holiday you were expected to announce where, and with whom, you were staying—but even the ordinary comings and goings of her tenants filled the landlady with a venomous mistrust. At

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her first-floor window she crouched all day like a sphinx, the mild milk-blue eyes scanning the streets for breaches of the peace, the motherly white head popped over the ledge of the window—the ancient, imperishable head of a turtle...

Miss Ellis leaned her head, where tiny fires were spitting, onto the palm of one hand, and closed her eyes. How could she have known? After months of living out of suitcases, in respectable hotels she could not afford and rooming-houses she could not abide; finding this apartment—clean, decent, cheap—had seemed promising enough, a sign of possible new entries. How could she have predicted that the neighborhood would terrify her so she would tremble in her bed behind a barricaded door? How would she have guessed that coming home, late or early, she must scurry along the too-quiet streets hardly daring to lift her head to the menacing regularity of brownstone landings, carved iron balustrades, lace curtains hanging damply in bay windows—a series, endlessly repeated?

And behind every window someone decaying, face to the wall, fed on scraps and souvenirs, lifting a hand at sunset to take in the milk or pull down a shade. And behind every door a Mrs. O'Neill?

No, I cannot bear it! the librarian cried out in a coarse, ugly voice, no longer caring, *I cannot bear any of it, anymore!* She lay her face on the desk, her nails clutching its slippery varnished surface, her feet thrumming the floor like the feet of a cruelly abused and disappointed child.

"Anything wrong, Miss?"

Bucket and mop in hand, the janitor loomed up before her in the furred dusk, concern on his gnomish, balding face.

"Nothing, nothing, I was dizzy for a moment. I'm all right now." She touched her handkerchief to shamed eyes. "Thank you for your interest. I'll get a taxi and go right home."

The woman sprang stiff-legged with little jagging steps down the library corridor, leaving the janitor staring dully after her, the final slips of the day unfiled, the blinds undrawn.

Neck twisted to a preposterous angle, Mrs. O'Neill

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craned from the window, watching her fourth-floor tenant coming home from work in a taxi. The landlady's eyes followed unashamed as she paid the driver and engaged the flight of brownstone steps, the aged wobbly head rotating half-circle on its stem after her. Even as Miss Ellis entered the downstairs hall she felt the malignant eyes piercing her back and it seemed she was shutting heavy doors behind her she would never, never have the strength to reopen.

On the third day the library called, and she was forced to say she had been too ill to use the phone. The swedish modern pieces, the bamboo blinds, the copies of books she had meant all her life to buy and read, nothing was of any solace. Nothing could make it worth-while to get out of bed: to wash, dress, eat properly. She could only lie, face to the wall, while the rich tide of sunlight advanced relentlessly; until, like a friend kept waiting too long for an appointment, it turned and went away.

There were hours when her silence and immobility rushed out toward a frozen corridor, the room congealed into a cube of ice, glittering, dangerous, remote. For the pity of it she turned her head and wept, but the tears rotted her cheeks, a mildewed dampness remaining on them long after her eyes were wide-open and dry. Grinding of cars slowing down near the house, creakings outside her landing would set her heart to ricochetting like a trapped rabbit's; then when the agony in her pulses repaired she would lie once more spent, still.

On the last day of that week she rose from bed, got dressed, and went off to her job. Ritual of toothbrush-and-comb, the clothes that hung in the closet like costumes for a play, breathing out a fine, malicious life of their own—these were instances of an implacable order, familiar but uneasy. As were the flights of elongated stairs her wary body feared, and with justice; that pitched forward steeply like a funnel and terminating, unforgivably abrupt, dashed her headlong toward the door.

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Out on the street of course it was easier, the pavement underfoot reliable and friendly, smoothed down by all those other feet shuffling or scuttering or flowing past. Except—if she were not careful the cracks between the paving blocks would begin to gape alarmingly; and when she raised her eyes to escape the thick black furrows that suddenly creased the length of the street, the sky would soar off next, drawing all the atmosphere with it, creating a vacuum under the crystal dome.

Within this sphere (stretched taut, aching, about to burst) she bobbed along wickedly unsubstantial, a snowflake inside a paperweight. As the thousand-armed morning crowd embraced her, swept her downstairs and into a seat in the express car, she could think only of the snowstorm inside the paperweight. Sitting back with eyes narrowed, the opening and fluttering of morning newspapers made peaceful white blurs. But the furious, doomed energy of the train was again the crystal bubble, herself a delicate fragment held inside it in suspense, waiting, waiting for it to break.

Miss Ellis stood stock-still on the street and stared up at the lighted windows of her apartment.

Some rude, unknown hand must have switched on every light in the flat while she was away at work. From where she hesitated in the street, astonished, both front windows blinked through the marine-blue summer dusk like a pair of yellow eyes straining out of the dismal tall stack of building. In the left-hand window an accusatory splinter jutted between a crack in the blinds.

Naturally (she told herself) there were thousands of awful reasons why someone might get into her place—in an old building like this, things were always breaking down—and turning on the lights to do some repair, forget to shut them off before leaving. And even assuming that somebody who had no business there wanted to gain entrance: her heart leaped up in her ribs like a fish! How could he, or they, have possibly got past Mrs. O'Neill?

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Barring the idea of going upstairs this moment and perhaps confronting the intruders single-handed, wouldn't it be most sensible then to call Mrs. O'Neill from her supper and find out what had happened during the day, while she was gone?... But as soon as she reached her landlady's door she did an about-face and ran back to the sidewalk, where she teetered on the curb, neck stretched back to obtain the fullest view of her windows. The lights were still on. She walked into the vestibule and pressed a finger on her own doorbell.

Of course, there was no answering click from above. But if anyone were really up there, wouldn't the ring be enough to warn him that the tenant had interested friends, that she might be coming back with reinforcements, that—the police were on their way upstairs and he had better make himself scarce?

And as there was no answer again, she sat down on the doorstep to wait, her summer coat drawn about her shoulders, for the moment when the sinister feet would tramp down the stairs, the lusty brigands loaded down with all her possessions, and leave her free to repossess her establishment.

In the full-blown summer night the street lamps expanded like tropical moons. Under the lamps, circles of dark-eyed boys, arms twined lightly around each other's shoulders, improvised dance steps, called softly and meaningfully to girls who leaned out the windows and flung words down to them. Women dozed in doorways, their arms clasped around babies. From latticed windows looking out on fire-escapes, from the bright open cages of restaurants and bars, music glided into the street and clung to the signs that were printed on her eye as she ran, desperately, past: *Notario público, Optica Hispaña, Bodega, Agencia por embarco aeroplano.*

She must have fallen asleep there, on her doorstep. When she woke—how many hours later?—the street was deserted. Upstairs, the lights were still blazing away. Far from diminishing, the glare had actually increased: this time, it had been like straining up at a room on fire. By now Mrs. O'Neill

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must surely be asleep in her bed... Trusses, Braces, Corsets, Belts, Elastic hose... A white plaster nude, swaddled in bandages, stood upright—a wounded goddess—amid a fallen army of crutches, rupture appliances, athletic supports, stockings for varicose veins.

When she stopped to catch her breath, her moon-white face took shape in the gruesome window, and a traffic light ticked softly green, red, off and on. Two doors down, a vase of scarlet paper roses, dishevelled bleeding hearts, flared at her from the window of a bar and grill. Inside, a cluster of men, stunted by the violent pink neon, standing at an old-fashioned polished oak bar, staring up at a television screen; in the corner, a bull-throated juke box, blasting away; at the far end of the room—a phone booth. Drawing her coat tight, putting one hand up to shield her face, she walked in.

"*Amor de Madre...*" The music splintered the walls of the booth. They were glancing at her from the bar now, turning to one another silently, only their black eyes full of emphasis ("Hallo Ba-bee!") launched in her direction. Lifting a boneless hand, she dropped the nickels, clanging, into the box and slowly dialed the number of her apartment. When the bell had rung long enough—twenty, thirty times—and there was still no answer, she put down the receiver, not forgetting to pick up the money, and made her way safely out of the bar.

"Well, what is it you want?"

Mrs. O'Neill leaned over the window-sill, her hair raddled like a witch's.

"What is it now, what is it? Bothering people at this hour of the night!"

Annoyance and fatigue crumpled the old face, and something like contrition affected her tenant. An old woman, to be dragged out of bed... Still, it was too late to think of that.

"I was wondering—could you have let anyone into my apartment today?"

"Let anyone into your apartment!"

"I just got home," (she lied), "and found the lights burning,

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and thought perhaps you might know... I didn't want to go upstairs until I was sure—."

"If there are any lights burning in your apartment," the old woman said sourly, "you must have left them on yourself. What are you afraid of? I don't let anyone in my tenants' apartments. Go up and see for yourself. The nerve, bothering people at this hour with such questions."

She withdrew, lifted a hand to shut the window, returned.

"If anyone were up there," she volunteered, "they would be leaving the lights on, they'd be waiting for you in the dark, with flashlights.

"And neither am I surprised"—she went on—"at you being so jumpy, coming home at this hour of the night. It's not safe for a decent woman on the streets anymore, with this colored riff-raff and foreign element loose. You seemed a better type than to get mixed up with *that*. But it's your own funeral."

Mrs. O'Neill closed the window, the milky form floated back into the cave; then she returned, raised the window, and let out her parting bolt.

"As for you, Miss Ellis," she pronounced, "you're a coward."

This time she did not reappear.

Pausing to catch her breath at every landing, her heart fracturing, until at the last landing she turned the key in the lock and pushed open the door—.

Mrs. O'Neill was perfectly right, no one had been up there at all. (Unless the landlady herself had slipped up the stairs and turned on the lights to frighten her?) What had been a blazing question was refracted into a single light, the last scene of the sad dark morning: her blue slippers by the chair, her hairbrush bristly with dun-colored hairs, set down on the table next to the too-faithful lamp, still burning. Only, for a moment, before moving into the room she scattered it, a radiant mottled haze, the air luminous with vivid motes: as though a presence, like a tropical butterfly, had paused briefly, stretched its wings and was gone.

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She was calling somewhere from a phone booth. (Why had she forgotten to take into consideration that telephone booths were upright coffins?) In the narrow booth the air was stale and cloying, an odor of decay made the dreamer shudder for breath, her hand moving effortlessly, like something without bones, over the lightless numbers on the dial.

As the call was answered a curtain rose on the interior of her own apartment.

To her surprise, she discovered a noisy party in progress; lights blazing, the blinds drawn up at crazy angles, the room filled with tawdry and disreputable company—an atmosphere of the jazz age orgies she had read about, locked away from her mother in the bathroom, as a schoolgirl. All the rugs had been rolled back: couples were dancing to a windup phonograph: there was incessant, furtive drinking out of hip-flasks in corners of the rooms. Ashes dumped in tea saucers, overflowing the hammered copper vases, fluffed in great heaps on the floor, so that the dancers had to steer carefully to avoid stepping into the soft gray mounds. And on the couch—here she caught her breath!—a pair of heavily clocked black silk stockings and a slightly soiled garterbelt, evidence that shocking events had already been consummated, and worse perhaps were yet to come...

Rage lent her courage, spiked her tongue.

"Who are you?" she cried, "who let you in, what are you doing up there?"

Her immediate impression was that the connection had been severed. But eventually she realized that the person at the other end of the line was speaking to her evasively, patronizingly—like someone trying to get rid of an insistent child. She could hear the noise of a wad of gum being pushed back and forth in the speaker's mouth. It was some time before the drift of his words came through.

"Oh as for that, Miss Ellis," the voice coming over the wire was explaining, "you'll never know. You'll never know."

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THE APPOINTMENT

I

What can she tell him now, now that the hour
Is vanished from the room, the furniture
Flat without freshness, flat without power
To compose a scene; and is she even sure
The hour was there, the air strictly composed
To catch her breath, sustain her thought, her wish.
Now that even memory is forced,
Now that the spoon is silent in the dish?
And can she take his hand, hoping that touch
Once more will sweep away the other lives
That always part them? She asks not very much
Whose days will soon be buried in the graves
Of revery as shadows take their place.
And if she rests her head, closing her eyes,
She has no single image of his face,
Her mind will wander through a thousand lies
To fix upon a scene she had forgotten.
Why recollect one day and not another:
The turtle floating in the bowl, all rotten,
The rapid, waxy fingers of her mother?
Where is she now, to what can she return,
To what advance? The goal toward which her youth
Once seemed to point, she meditates to learn.
Is where, is past? Did it exist in truth?
Yet, she can't think how she would change her life.
She finds a fullness in her melancholy.
Whoever he may be, she is his wife.
The question her lips seek is still not ready.

II

And before, before her simplest hope and wish
Were chronicled in words and gesturing,

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Before the spoon was silent in the dish.
Before fulfillment questioned all fulfilling,
Could she have known how promises repent,
That they are cruelest when they are not broken,
That expectation flattens the event?
(Who's not rehearsed the tender words they've spoken?)
She can remember Christmas toys her brother
Opened with delight, when, without reason,
She cried beside the Christmas tree as Mother
Told her Christmas is a happy season.
Always dissatisfied with satisfaction,
Always discontent with what she did,
And discontent with her dissatisfaction,
Always eager, hopeful—disappointed,
Could she have told him: love me just a little,
Be cold, because to coldness we must come,
Be guarded, uncommited, practical,
Or else an honest tongue is shortly dumb?
Could she have said: love me, but do not place
Your faith in it, do not trust what you meant,
Be broken, disillusioned in advance,
Don't even trust your disillusionment?
And at that hour did she think secretly
That moonlit clouds and summer twilight moved
Her arms to feel and moved her lips to say
The words they both believed, how much they loved?

III

And looking back when her own history
Shall seem to her that it was always there,
Shall seem, at last—impersonal, will she
Remember bobolink and tanager
Across the stream, and yet forget the day
She watched; recall the sunfish strike the foam,
Stop still then strike again and dart away,

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And fail to place these images in time?
Will she remember dawn beside the lake
Before the wind came up, before round noon
Rose out and sat hard on the mountain's back,
Before the evening clamoured on the stone,
When deer were watching her and broke their stare—
White tails, like fingers, warning not to follow,
And think what happens happens everywhere,
And think remembered deer are running now?
Will she then say to him that disappointment,
Love and expectation all are one,
And when love finds its circular intent
Shall disappointment turn to expectation?
And will she ask why seeking is so sad:
Sad farmers where the rain is not enough,
Sad mothers in the homes unvisited;
Sad is the lived, and sad the unlived life?
The question her lips seek, will it be ready?
Appointments past her seeking will she seek?
Of thoughts, will disappointment be most holy?
Will expectation make her strong or weak?

IV

I ask these questions out of time not come.
The vanished hour appears, though in a wish.
Are chair and table shifting in the room?
Is that a noise, a spoon upon a dish?
Listen to me beyond my disappointment:
I never would have spoken, never slaved
To keep a kept appointment always broken
Hoping expectation might be saved,
If this appointment was the one she meant,
If loving me, her world of love was spent.

—ROBERT PACK

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

V. S. Naipaul *(My Aunt Gold Teeth)* was born in Chaguanas, Trinidad of a Hindu family. He was educated at the Queen's Royal College, Port of Spain, and University College, Oxford. His first novel, *The Mystic Masseur*, was published in 1957 and won the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize for that year; his second novel, *The Suffrage of Elvira*, was published in 1958. He has been a regular reviewer of fiction for *The New Statesman*, and has contributed articles to *Punch* and *The Times Literary Supplement*.

Philip Roth *(Epstein)*, this year's winner of the Aga Khan Prize for Literature, is already known to readers of THE PARIS REVIEW for his story *The Conversion of the Jews* which appeared in No. 18. His work has also been published by *Esquire*, *The Chicago Review*, *Commentary*, and *The Nation*. He was recently awarded the Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship. A former instructor of English at the University of Chicago, he now lives in New York City.

Evelyn Shefner *(The Fourth-Floor Apartment)* has just returned from a year in Europe where she lived and wrote in Tours, Florence, and Positano. She was born in Chicago, attended the University of Chicago, and now lives in New York City. She has worked as trade-paper reporter and as an editor for a medical publisher, and she has published stories in *Commentary*, *The Hudson Review*, and a pocket collection of short stories called *Various Temptations*.

INTERVIEW

Terry Southern *(Interview with Henry Green)* is a native Texan and former resident of Paris and New York. He has been published in *Harper's Bazaar* and *New Story* as well as in previous issues of The Paris Review. His novel, *Flash and Filigree*, recently published by André Deutsch and by Coward-McCann in the U.S., was well received. He now lives in Geneva.

ESSAY

Niccolo Tucci *(To Be And Not To Be)* writes in both Italian and English. His stories have appeared frequently in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, and *The Atlantic Monthly*, and Simon and Schuster will publish next year the first volume of a series of memoirs. In 1956 he was awarded the Viareggio literary prize for his book of stories in Italian entitled *Il Segreto*. Mr. Tucci lives in New York.

POETRY

Richard Barnes *(La Vie Littéraire en Province)* lives in Claremont, California.

David Galler *(The Wrack)* lives in New York where he works for a publisher. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Sewanee Review*, *Yale Review*, *Accent*, *Western Review*, and *Poetry, London-New York*.

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Allen Grossman *(Two Poems)* has published in *Poetry*, *Commentary*, and *The Harvard Advocate*. He is a graduate student at Brandeis University.

Lawrence Lipton *(Materia Poetica)* has published two novels and one book of poetry. His articles and poems have appeared in *The Nation*, *Chicago Review*, *London Magazine* and other periodicals in England and America. He lives in Venice, California.

Philip Larkin (*Referred Back*) is Librarian of the University of Hull. His recent volume of poems, *The Less Deceived*, has caused more excitement in England than any other book of poetry in many years.

Oswald LeWinter *(A Monsieur Lyonard, Peintre du Roi)* is a janitor in Brooklyn. Born in Austria, he attended Adelphi College and Columbia University.

James Merrill *(Amsterdam)* is the author of two books of verse, *First Poems* and *Short Stories*, and of a novel, *Seraglio*. He lives in Stonington, Connecticut.

Perry Organ (*Esprit de Corps)* is a graduate student at Harvard who has published in *Audience* and other magazines.

Robert Pack *(The Appointment)* has recently returned from a year on a Fulbright grant to Italy. His first book of poems appeared in *Poets of Today II*. He teaches at Barnard College.

David Perkins *(A Lady Dying)*, recently released from the U.S. Army, is an instructor in English at Harvard.

Helen Pinkerton (*Two Poems*) is the wife of the poet Wesley Trimpi, whose *Oedipus To the Oracle* appeared in THE PARIS REVIEW 16. She studied at Stanford and at Harvard. Her work has been published by *The Pacific Spectator* and in Ballentine Books Anthology, *New Poems by American Poets*.

John Woods *(When Senses Fled)* teaches at Eastern Michigan College in Kalamazoo. The University of Indiana Press published his book of verse, *The Deaths at Paragon, Indiana*.

Alan Stephens *(A Walk In The Void)* is an Assistant Professor of English at Arizona State. He recently held a fellowship in creative writing at Stanford.

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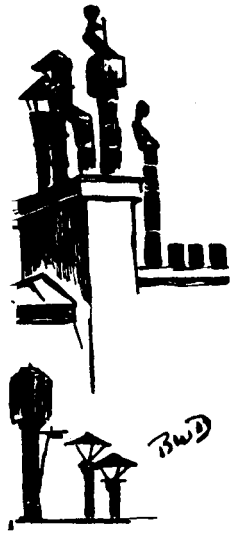

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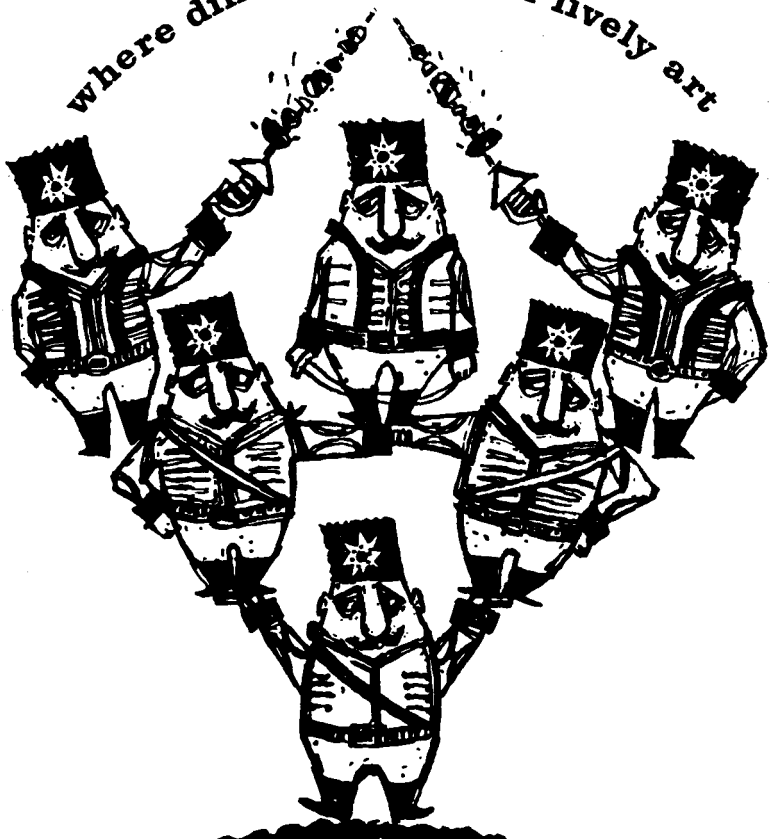

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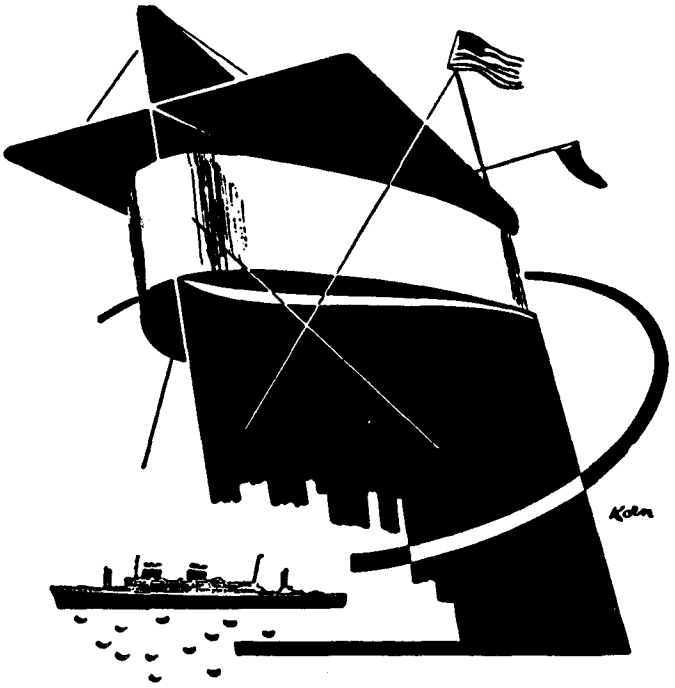

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